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**COMMUNICATION  
IN GENERAL EDUCATION**





# COMMUNICATION IN GENERAL EDUCATION

*Edited by*

EARL JAMES McGRATH

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by

Earl J. McGrath

# Preface

Communication is the basis of all social life. The more complex society becomes the greater the need for precise communication at an increasingly high level of abstraction. Life in the rural community where most Americans lived some years ago involved relatively simple processes of communication. Now, however, we are living in a dynamic and rapidly expanding society. A large percentage of our citizens through the newspaper, the radio, television, motion pictures, and other forms of rapid communication is faced with problems totally unknown to their grandfathers. The activities of individuals and governments throughout the world are often described in the most modest home in the smallest hamlet within a few hours of the event. To understand these problems even at an elementary level and to formulate and express thoughts about them, all citizens must constantly engage in a two-way process of communication. They must see, listen, and read; and they must talk and write.

Men cannot live an intelligent life today without a knowledge of, and skill in using, the communicative arts. If they cannot read, and talk, and listen, and write understandably and intelligently they cannot think clearly. They cannot understand the world in which they live. They cannot participate in the common activities of their time. They cannot fulfill the responsibilities of citizenship.

We face today exceedingly complicated national and international problems upon which all citizens will be called to make a judgment. Take the matter of maintaining peace. Here the issues are many, intricate, and abstract. Yet they must be understood if our people are to make intelligent decisions regarding the steps that can be taken to preserve peace in a free world. To understand these issues the individual must be able to read, listen, talk, and write effectively. And to perform these skills he must be able to order his thoughts according to the laws of critical and logical reasoning.

The point need not be labored. In a very real sense the destiny of our society and of each of us individually will be determined by our ability to communicate with one another and with the citizens of other nations about contemporary problems. The realization of this fact has caused the UNESCO to give special attention to fundamental education throughout the world. Functional illiteracy must be wiped out, for it is more dangerous to the future of mankind than malaria or bubonic plague. Unless the peoples of the various nations can communicate at least in their own languages how can they understand the hopes and the plans of those who have dedi-

cated themselves through the United Nations to work unceasingly for universal peace?

American educators have had an increasing awareness in recent years of the importance of educating all citizens in the arts of communication. Great strides have been made in the elimination of illiteracy and in the cultivation of habits of abstract thinking. As part of this movement the colleges of the country have been examining their instruction in the fields of communication in the hope of making it more functional in the day-by-day life of the average person. Some institutions have already made basic changes in conventional courses in English Composition and Rhetoric by making them less a formal study of the rules of grammar and rhetoric, and by using the actual experiences of students as vehicles of instruction.

Radical departures from tradition have also been accomplished by the integration of various subject matters commonly found in separate departments like English, speech, and psychology in courses often called Communications or Communication Skills. These courses are based on a recognition of the fact that all the processes of communication such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking are intellectual operations having much in common. Other influences on basic instruction in communication have flowed from speech pathology and from the field of semantics. All these developments should be of interest to the instructors of students who are trying to learn how to communicate their ideas to their fellow men.

The purpose of this book, like its companion volumes in the fields of science, social science, and the humanities, is to bring together various points of view concerning the teaching of communication and descriptions of courses based on these views. It is hoped that these writings may be of help to those who are only now considering a revision of traditional courses. To contrast various theories and practices several statements are included describing and defending content and procedures of instruction which are not new but which still command the respect of many members of the profession.

The editor wishes to express his thanks to those who have contributed to the volume. Interest in it has already reached sufficient proportions to justify the prediction that it will be very valuable to those who are reconsidering the purposes of instruction in the various functions of communication. Special thanks are due to the officers of the Carnegie Corporation for having made possible the visits to institutions and the conversations with authors out of which this project grew.

Earl James McGrath

Washington, D. C.  
June 23, 1949

# Preface

Preface .....	v
"No Signs, No Symbols! Uses A-B-C's" A Problem of Practical Definition .....	1
<i>Lennox Grey</i>	
The Program in Communication Skills at the State University of Iowa .....	18
<i>John C. Gerber</i>	
Oral Communication in General Education.....	37
<i>C. W. Edney</i>	
The Minnesota Communication Program.....	58
<i>Harold B. Allen</i>	
Basic Communication at Michigan State College.....	74
<i>Frederic Reeve</i>	
The Drake University Program in Communication.....	89
<i>Thomas F. Dunn</i>	
The Task of the Listener.....	103
<i>S. I. Hayakawa</i>	
The Course in Verbal Communication at the University of Illinois .....	113
<i>Lee S. Hultzén</i>	
Freshman Rhetoric at the University of Illinois.....	127
<i>Charles W. Roberts</i>	
The Freshman English Course at Florida State University.....	134
<i>James Paul Stoakes</i>	
Purdue University's Program in Communications.....	143
<i>George S. Wykoff</i>	
The Comprehensive Freshman English Course at the University of Florida.....	157
<i>J. Hooper Wise</i>	
English Communication at Colgate University.....	173
<i>John B. Hoben</i>	
The Role of Principle in Teaching Writing to Undergraduates....	180
<i>Wesley H. Tilley</i>	
Teaching the College Student to Write.....	198
<i>Norman Foerster</i>	
A Clinical Speech Program at the College Level.....	214
<i>Wendell Johnson</i>	
Graduate Work for Teachers of Communication.....	220
<i>Porter G. Perrin</i>	
Self-Realization, Communication, and Aesthetic Experience....	228
<i>Francis Shoemaker</i>	



## "No Signs, No Symbols! Uses A-B-C's".

### A Problem of Practical Definition

A PARADOXICAL advertising slogan of a New York stenographic school provides the title of this chapter. Hauntingly, it points to one of the key problems confronting anyone concerned with the study of modern communication as part of modern general education: what *symbol* means today.

There are at least three such key problems in modern study of communication. One is *circumference* — how much territory to take in. This is the problem which first excites most students of the field as they think of the concentric circles of communication expanding out from the local community through regional, nationwide, and worldwide communities. We are first impressed with the *mass* of mass communication, causing us to exclaim at the power of the new media — film, radio, color graphics, high speed print — hardly less impressive than the power of the atom bomb.

The second key problem is *sectoring* — how to cut this cosmic circle into manageable pie-chart segments that will show clearly and in proportion the areas of communication explored (and not yet explored) by workers in anthropology, political science, sociology, psychology, biological science, physical science, history and geography, philosophy, art, music, language and literature, and others. Most of us start from one subsection of one of these segments or sectors, often with all too little conception of the lines of inquiry radiating out within the rest of our own sector, let alone through the other segments. Those lines are still slender and tenuous in many sectors — probably boldest in political science and perhaps most numerous though fragmented in literature and art. Yet when all these scattered lines are brought together in a newly marked segment called "communication" they have considerable body and depth of shading, as comprehensive books like Smith, Lass-

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By Lennox Grey, Teachers College, Columbia University.



well, and Casey's *Propaganda, Communication and Public Opinion* (1946) and Bryson's *The Communication of Ideas*<sup>1</sup> (1948) show.

The third key problem is *center* — how to define or characterize the center where all the expanding circles take their start and where all the segments and radii come to focus. Experts in many aspects of communication seem to be fairly well agreed that this center is *the symbol* or the symbolic process in man which enables him to take the impressions of gross experience, abbreviate them into manageable signs or symbols — verbal, pictorial, structural, gestural, rhythmical, tonal — and carry on communication with other men through them. But anyone who has attempted to discuss these phenomena of the symbol and the symbolic process realizes that we know less about them than we knew about the atom and its structure in pre-electron days. At least, in those "atomic particle" days, virtually everyone agreed there were atoms, knew something about the behavior of various kinds of atoms, and agreed that all matter should be thought of in atomic terms. Today it is fairly clear, from the "No Signs, No Symbols" slogan and from plenty of other evidence, that many people know that there are such phenomena as symbols, and even how a few of them behave, but that they do not recognize that all communication is a matter of symbols, or that A-B-C's are as surely symbols as stenographic pothooks or wordsigns.

This elementary matter is the focus of this chapter. Without this elementary key concept, and a thoughtful approach to it, no amount of statistical information about who-says-what-to-whom-in-what-medium-with-what-effect is likely to do what is needed for the general education of our people, to protect them from exploitation on the one hand, or to enable them consciously to build more livable symbolic mansions of the spirit, on the other.

The focus will be kept as sharply as possible on the matter of definition for purposes of general education — seeking first a common ground in the definitions of the experts who seem to have done most to shape concepts that people generally can come to understand, and second (and correlatively) asking how we can work toward still better definition and understanding than we now have.

<sup>1</sup>Lyman Bryson (editor), *The Communication of Ideas* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948).

Such sharply limited focus does not mean lack of concern with other questions which the "No Signs, No Symbols" slogan and its thousand counterparts in our life today present. These should be recognized and tabled for future judgment. One obviously is *ethical*. Does the management of the stenographic school know that A-B-C's are signs and symbols, but also shrewdly know that the "average subway reader" does not, and hence is exploiting ignorance? Another, which would tip the scales in favor of the school, is *linguistic-rhetorical*. Does the stenographic school simply use an ellipsis-hyperbole newspaper-headline device here, which anyone but a hidebound literalist would understand to mean "No New Signs, No Strange Symbols! Uses Only Good Old Familiar A-B-C's." I assume that is what it means. Still another is *methodological-educational*. Is the stenographic school sure that its students' previous habits with A-B-C's may not interfere with, even more than facilitate, the learning of a shorthand based on A-B-C's, whereas an entirely new set of symbols might speed the process—just as one must reject familiar a-b-c hunt-and-peck typing in favor of initially unfamiliar but ultimately faster touch-typing? These are the ultimately important questions; but answers to them must wait on the basic question of what we conceive symbols and the symbolic process to be.

## II

Common dictionary definitions appear at first to offer neither conspicuous help nor hindrance concerning the symbol as center of the communication process, though they throw the advertiser's A-B-C distinction into some doubt.

The 1949 *New Collegiate Dictionary* defines *sign* thus:

1. A conventional symbol representing an idea, as a word, letter, or mark.
2. A motion, action, or gesture . . .
3. A publicly displayed notice . . .
4. Something indicating the existence of a thing; a token.
5. A prodigy; an omen . . .

The new *American College Dictionary* differs chiefly in order and in emphasis on the technical sign:

a conventional mark, figures, or symbol used technically instead of the word, or words, which it represents, as an abbreviation.

The *Collegiate Dictionary* give sthese definitions of *symbol*:

1. That which suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention, etc., especially a visible sign of something invisible, as an idea, a quality, an emblem; as, the lion is the *symbol* of courage.
2. In writing or printing, a conventional sign, such as a character, a let-

ter, or an abbreviation, used instead of a word or words, as in mathematics, physics, chemistry, music, phonetics, or the like, to represent operations, quantities, spatial positions, elements, relations, qualities, sounds, etc. 3. *Psychoanalysis*. An object . . . or act representing a repressed desire of which the individual is unconscious.

The *American College Dictionary* differs slightly in phrasing but has the same two basic definitions in the same order:


1. Something used or regarded as standing for or representing something else; a material object representing something immaterial; an emblem, token, or sign. 2. A letter, figure, or other character or mark, or a combination of letters or the like, used to represent something: *the algebraic symbol,  $x$ ; the chemical symbol, Av . . .*

The aim in including these practically interchangeable definitions of *sign* and *symbol* is twofold: (1) to refresh the reader's memory concerning the definitions the student is most likely to turn to, and (2) to indicate their "di-polarity," or positions at opposite ends of the symbolic spectrum, with the technical symbol at one end and something like the literary symbol at the other, and no consistently marked continuous middle ground between them. This definition of the extremes, in which the dictionary makers appropriately record the most frequent usage, will become instructionally important later in discussion of the use of definitions for general education.

The first step in making a collation of less abridged modern definitions of symbol for purposes of general education is a relatively easy one. Despite many differences in the angles of their approach, the language of Peirce, Ogden and Richards, Mead, Dewey, Morris, Lasswell, Korzybski, Hayakawa, Whitehead, Cassirer, Langer, and scores of others has enough in common to persuade the reader that he is dealing with one key concept, not a collection of superficially similar verbalisms.

Five illustrations will show the similarities and also some of the differences of angle.

George H. Mead, "social behaviorist" philosopher, who has influenced such other notable workers in communication as Dewey, Lasswell, and Morris, observes:

. . . We get the beginnings of the process of communication in the cooperative process, whether of reproduction, caring for the young, or fighting. The gestures are not yet significant symbols, but they do allow of communication . . . For effective cooperation one has to have symbols by means of which the responses can be carried out, so that getting a significant language is of first importance . . . The significant symbol is nothing but that part of  which serves as a gesture to call out the other part of the process,

the response of the other . . . The use of symbols is then of the highest importance . . .<sup>2</sup>

Ogden and Richards, writing as psychologists and critics of language and literature, define their concern thus:

Symbolism is the study of the part played in human affairs by language and symbols of all kinds . . . It singles out for special inquiry the ways in which symbols help us and hinder us in reflecting on things . . . Words, as everyone knows, "mean" nothing by themselves, although the belief that they did . . . was once equally universal.<sup>3</sup>

Sapir, anthropological linguist, holds that:

It is best to admit that language is primarily a vocal actualization of the tendency to see reality symbolically.<sup>4</sup>

Korzybski, therapeutic "non-Aristotelian" semanticist, declares:

Man's achievements rest upon the use of symbols. For this reason, we must consider ourselves as a symbolic, semantic class of life, and those who rule the symbols, rule us. Now, the term "symbol" applies to a variety of things, words and money included . . . In the rough, a symbol is defined as a sign which stands for something . . . The abuse of symbolism is like the abuse of food or drink: it makes people ill, and so their reactions become deranged.<sup>5</sup>

Susanne K. Langer, philosopher of art, gathers together and develops a number of these concepts:

. . . Not only science, but myth, analogy, metaphorical thinking, and art are intellectual activities determined by "symbolic modes." . . . Symbolism is the recognized key to that mental life which is characteristically human and above the level of sheer animality. Symbol and meaning make man's world, far more than sensation. . . . Man's conquest of the world undoubtedly rests on the supreme development of his brain, which allows him to synthesize, delay, and modify his reactions by the interpolation of symbols in the gaps and confusions of direct experience, and by means of "verbal signs" to add the experiences of other people to his own. . . . The development of language is the history of the gradual accumulation and elaboration of verbal symbols. . . . The symbol-making function is one of man's primary activities, like eating, looking, or moving about. . . . The fact that the human brain is constantly carrying on a process of symbolic transformation of the experiential data that come to it causes it to be a veritable fountain of more or less spontaneous ideas. As all registered experience tends to terminate in action, it

<sup>2</sup>George H. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), pp. 234, 268.

<sup>3</sup>C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1939), pp. 9-10.

<sup>4</sup>*Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, (cop. 1933) IX, 159.

<sup>5</sup>Alfred Korzybski, *Science and Sanity* (Lakeville, Connecticut: The International Non-Aristotelian Library Publishing Company, 1948), pp. 76, 78, 84.

is only natural that a typically human function should require a typically human form of overt activity; and that is just what we find in *the sheer expression of ideas*. This is the activity of which beasts appear to have no need. And it accounts for just those traits in man which he does not hold in common with the other animals — ritual, art, laughter, weeping, speech, superstition, and scientific genius. . . . The great contribution of Freud to the philosophy of mind has been the realization that human behavior is not only a food-getting strategy, but is also a language; that every *move* is at the same time a *gesture*. Symbolization is both an end and an instrument.<sup>6</sup>

\* The critical reader will recognize, of course, that the listing of these statements may be a suitable first stage for purposes of discourse, but that it is not the first stage in thinking about them — that they are not *raw materials* but represent selection and restriction on the basis of previous stages of comparison. They offer a chronological ordering, also; and Susanne Langer is given more space than the others because she suggests something of the cumulation, synthesizing, and expanding of ideas taking place in this field, and because the availability of her book *Philosophy in a New Key* in a Pelican reprint has importance for general education.

Assuming for the moment that these excerpts do not seriously falsify their authors' ideas by their restricted context, and that they do represent a conscientious effort to suggest the difference in angle from which each analyst approaches the problem, we would appear to be justified in seeing agreement on three points at least: (1) that a symbol is any sign that stands as an abbreviation for something else, (2) that it is the basic factor in human communication, and (by implication, at least) (3) that it is always to be thought of in a context of human behavior. The variety of approach may be a little confusing, but Mead's (and Freud's) concern here with the co-operative gestural symbols does not nullify Ogden's and Richards' or Korzybski's concern with the verbal symbols, nor do they deny Sapir's or Langer's conviction about the human tendency to see reality symbolically whether in language or the arts. This is not to say that they do not have points of conflict, but rather that irreconcilable conflict is not conspicuous here in the first stages of collating definition.

The second major step, where one must move from elementary verbal matching and elementary checking for obvious

<sup>6</sup>Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (New York: Penguin Books, Inc., 1948), pp. Preface, 21, 22, 24, 32, 34, 41.

contradiction of idea to some consistent focusing principle or concept, brings the real difficulty for both the teacher and the student. For while there seems to be abundant agreement about the phenomenon of the symbol, and agreement that it must be thought of in social process, there is no consistent clue, even in Susanne Langer's longer statement, as to how the symbolic process works psychologically. Does it start with gesture? Or is it primarily a matter of *seeing*? Or is there some definable interplay of gesture, touch, vocalization, audition, perception, according to some principle of sequential or simultaneous process, that will enable one to observe himself and other individuals for the better management and use of the symbolic process?

This lack of consistent clue could be due, obviously, to lack of sufficient context. Unfortunately that is not the case. There appears to be agreement on the symbol but not on the inner workings of the symbolic process. Comparison of larger contexts results in more rather than less diffusion of attention, and in distracting questions of aim (for example, the "negative" concern with avoiding error in Ogden and Richards and Korzybski and the "positive" concern with the creative establishing of symbols in Mead and Langer) that tend to drive the reader to intuitive alliances that are acts of faith or aesthetic preference rather than reasoned choices or critical resolutions of the issues. While I may prefer Mead and Langer, others prefer Ogden and Richards, and still others prefer Korzybski and Hayakawa. Any one of these is useful. But no one or two or three of these tell quite the story for purposes of general education today. They are all tenuous on certain aspects of the symbolic process out of which the observable symbol comes.

Much as I like Susanne Langer's concept, for instance — that "the human brain is constantly carrying on a process of symbolic transformation of the experiential data that comes to it" and that in consequence the brain is "a veritable fountain of more or less spontaneous ideas" — I realize that I am not told here (or elsewhere) just how that process works. I have a feeling that it is a comparative, analogical, metaphorical process; but I realize that that is rather sketchy hypothesis based on a scattered rather than solid body of evidence.

Again I feel that I am getting close to the process when I read Korzybski on "abstracting" as the basis of the symbolic process:

If we enquire what we do in science, we find that we "observe" silently and then record our observations *verbally*. From a neurological point of view, we abstract whatever we and the instruments can; then we summarize; and, finally, we generalize, by which we mean the process of abstracting carried further.<sup>1</sup>

Coupled with Korzybski's "structural differential" this becomes tangible. (The "structural differential" is a cardboard-and-string "mobile" beginning with an "infinite" or "broken" cardboard parabola with an indefinitely great number of small holes indicating the indefinitely great number of characteristics that could be ascribed to an event if we could only observe them all; connected with that by strings is a finite circle with a finite number of holes within it, indicating the limited number of characteristics we *can* observe about an object; connected with that with strings in turn is an oblong shape like a trunk tag, with a smaller number of holes, that symbolizes the label we attach to the object and the smaller number of characteristics we can include in it; and strung from this tag successively are other tags — abstractions abstracted from one or another characteristic of the preceding abstractions. A dozen or more noticeable characteristics in the parabolic *event* are indicated by pegs; these are tied by strings to a half dozen pegs in the *object*, showing the reduced number of actively observed characteristics, and these are abstracted in turn as two or three pegs in the *label*.) The whole seems reasonable and useful for the purpose of indicating that the object is *not* the event, and that the label is *neither* object nor event — yet that they are all strung together. *But what is the string?*

A cross-check in Hayakawa's *Language in Action* and Johnson's *People in Quandaries*, which simplify and interpret many of Korzybski's key ideas for use of college students, leaves the same question.

Hayakawa provides a useful "abstraction ladder" based on Korzybski's "structural differential." But the closest we get to a definition of the strings is in the statement, "The 'object' of our experience, then, is not the 'thing in itself,' but an *interaction between our nervous systems (with all their imperfections) and something outside them.*"<sup>2</sup>

Johnson similarly gives a useful diagram of the "process of abstracting" based on Korzybski, and also a helpful text-chart

<sup>1</sup>Korzybski, *Science and Sanity*, p. 377.

<sup>2</sup>S. I. Hayakawa, *Language in Action* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, [1933] 1948), p. 94.

of his own on the "process of communication" in nine or more stages:

1. An event occurs 2. which stimulates Mr. A through eyes, ears, or other sensory organs . . . 3. nervous impulses travel to Mr. A's brain, and from there to his muscles and glands, producing tensions, preverbal "feelings," etc. 4. which Mr. A then begins to translate into words, according to his accustomed verbal patterns, and out of all the words he "thinks of" 5. he "selects," or abstracts, certain ones which he arranges in some fashion, and then by means of sound waves and light waves Mr. A speaks to Mr. B 6. whose ears and eyes are stimulated by the sound waves . . .<sup>9</sup>

And thence in 7, 8, 9, etc., Mr. B completes the circle by repeating Mr. A's 2, 3, 4, 5. But the connecting strings still remain tenuous in this diagram and also at the key point in a more fully phrased "Outline of . . . Stages, Functions, and Possible Disorders" where the interesting term "symbolic formulation" occurs:

*Stage 4: Verbalization of organismic evaluations (putting feelings into words, roughly "thinking")*

#### I. Functions

A. Symbolic formulation (translation of "feelings," tensions, "hunches," impulses into words and other symbols)<sup>10</sup>

None of this analysis is intended to depreciate or condemn the analysis by Susanne Langer, or Korzybski, or Hayakawa, or Johnson. It is to point out rather that we do not yet have the psychological data to give a firm statement of the process of "symbolic transformation" or "symbolic formulation"—though in the latter two phrases we may have a hint of *the terms in which we can talk about what we want to know*. Perhaps we can never know, as we think we now know the structure of the atom. We may have to apply to symbols Johnson's observation that "Abstractions on all these levels are *unspeakable*. We can speak about them, but we can never transform them completely into words."<sup>11</sup>

One of the specific nubs of this process of symbolic formulation is unquestionably the question of "imaging." Ogden and Richards' *The Meaning of Meaning* provides a striking instance of our uncertainty on this point. They, too, diagram the symbolic process, with their widely familiar triangle of meaning:

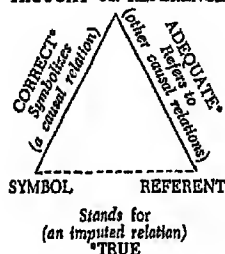
<sup>9</sup>Wendell Johnson, *People in Quandaries* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946), p. 472.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 473.

<sup>11</sup>Johnson, *People in Quandaries*, p. 109.



## THOUGHT OR REFERENCE



The triangle has been effectively used to show that symbol and referent are not the same. But it and the accompanying text still leave the apex of Thought or Reference (or symbolic formulation) in the air. For after giving this image they go on to question "imaging."

In this account we have carefully avoided all mention of images — those revivals or copies of sensory experience which figure so prominently in most accounts of thinking. There are good reasons why attempts to build a theory of interpretation upon images must be hazardous. One of these is the grave doubt whether in some minds they ever occur or ever have occurred. Another is that in very many interpretations where words play no recognizable part, introspection, unless excessively subtle and therefore of doubtful value as evidence, fails to show that imagery is present. . . . If images of any sort are involved . . . it is certain that they are not always involved *qua* images, i.e., as copying or representing the things to which the reference points, but in a looser capacity as mere signs and not in their capacity as mimetic or simulative signs.<sup>12</sup>

The plain fact, from these several seemingly typical and certainly most widely current kinds of thinking on the subject, is that the psychological characteristics of the symbolic process are still highly conjectural. It is not that the hypotheses are wrong or contradictory; it is simply that they are still hypotheses. The master key (or string) may exist somewhere in psychological research. So far, in these or other formulations, it has not been put in terms usable for general education. Our psychologists have not yet been able to turn the x-ray on our skulls, as the fantasy sequence does in part in the U. S. Navy film *Film Tactics*, to reveal the process of "symbolic formulation" or "symbolic transformation" at work, or able to show the electrons, atoms, and molecules of the symbol in some neat tinker-toy cluster of brightly colored balls and sticks as our physicists have done. One feels that he may be near the solu-

<sup>12</sup>Ogden and Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*, pp. 59-61.

tion in the ink-blot associations of the Rorschach tests — but then one realizes that he starts with the predetermining factor of a visual image. Again, since these several writers all give broad credit to Gestalt psychology,<sup>13</sup> one may feel that he has the clue in their accumulated findings on “unity of the senses,” or synaesthesia or synaesthesia<sup>14</sup> — the idea of which was also accepted long ago by William James when he wrote:

... all our sense-organs influence each other's sensations . . . It must be that the cerebral process of the first sensation is reinforced or otherwise altered by the other current which comes in.<sup>15</sup>

But none of this has itself quite yielded the needed economical gestalt of the symbolic process. This gap in the “closure” becomes more conspicuous as each writer goes on to discuss the question of “structure” in its larger dimensions. Here he can point to the evidence of patterning in the externalized symbols in mathematics, science, literature, and art. The unanimity of the writers on many aspects of the external structuring is very reassuring after the uncertainty on the sensation-perception process. Almost inescapably as a consequence of such external structuring, relating symbol to symbol, one reasons back to a similar internal structuring process, relating subelement to subelement to make the symbol itself. But again — shouldn't we be as wary of creating a false Structural Illusion as Ogden and Richards would have us wary of false Symbolic Illusions?

William James implies this problem in a passage that also has interesting reference to instructional methodology, and that may now serve as transition to the question of definition in the classroom in the light of the various debatable matters raised here.

The opinion so stoutly professed by many, that language is essential to thought, seems to have this much of truth in it, that all our inward images tend invincibly to attach themselves to something sensible, so as to gain in corporeity and life. Words serve this purpose, gestures serve it, stones, straws, chalk-marks, anything will do. As soon as any one of these things stands for the idea, the latter seems to be more real. Some persons, the present writer among the number, can hardly lecture without a black-board: the abstract conceptions must be symbolized by letters, squares

<sup>13</sup>For example, *Philosophy in a New Key*, p. 73; *Science and Sanity*, p. 74n; *The Meaning of Meaning*, p. 13.

<sup>14</sup>George W. Hartmann, *Gestalt Psychology* (New York: Ronald Press, 1931), p. 150; *The Meaning of Meaning*, p. 126.

<sup>15</sup>William James, *Principles of Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt [1890, 1918]), Vol. II, pp. 29-30.

or circles, and the relations between them by lines. All this symbolism, linguistic, graphic, and dramatic, has other uses too, for it abridges thought and fixes terms. But one of its uses is surely to rouse the believing reaction and give to the ideas a more living reality.<sup>16</sup>

### III

At this point we would all like to be able to produce a grand central solution, worthy of the great dimension of the vision developed by many modern thinkers. But (to continue our frank "Yes, but" treatment) we must recognize that we are dealing with a matter not only of idea but of human behavior, to which students and staff have varied responses. And, to shift the metaphor, we may well be content if we can bring forth a mouse of an idea, provided that mouse may enter where a lion would put people to flight.

In the face of these problems, college teachers are likely to respond at first in one of four ways:

The timid teacher is likely to avoid the questions of symbols entirely — probably on the rationalization of "suspended judgment." (Either a mouse or a lion can frighten the timid teacher, of course!)

The "open-minded" blithely eclectic teacher is likely to dump the whole problem of resolution in the student's lap: "Go read Ogden and Richards, Korzybski (or Hayakawa, or Johnson), and Langer, and compare their discussions of symbols."

The "shock-treatment" teacher is likely to pick out several of the most dramatic of the passages to show the student how naive or wrong he is.

The "must-be-consistent" teacher is likely to pick out *one* of these and make it his touchstone, whether from faith or from expediency.

Between and beyond these frequently observed "types" of responses and responders, of course, are many other very human combinations and extensions. And in the combination our hope must lie. For while no one of the four too familiar responses proves adequate, a judicious combination may not prove bad.

Concerning the first, we cannot ignore this current concern with symbols and the symbolic process which runs all through Smith, Lasswell and Casey's impressive annotated bibliography in *Propaganda, Communication and Public Opinion*,

<sup>16</sup>James, *Principles of Psychology*, II, p. 305.

starting from political science, or which prompts a writer like Susanne K. Langer to say, as she seeks the basis of both art and science:

. . . The age of science has begotten a new philosophical issue, inestimably more profound than its original empiricism . . . ; . . . all at once, the edifice of human knowledge stands before us, not as a vast collection of sense reports, but as a structure of *facts that are symbols* and *laws that are their meanings*. A new philosophical theme has been set forth to a coming age. . . . The power of symbolism is its cue, as the finality of sense-data was the cue of a former epoch.<sup>17</sup>

But we must also suspend *final judgment*. Hence we will do well to make a frankly hypothetical approach, in the spirit of modern science and in keeping with the essentially "hypothetical" nature of the symbol itself, conceived as a reasonably adequate abstraction of what it is supposed to stand for, but not the exact counterpart.

Concerning the second type of response, irresponsible open-mindedness, we cannot say to the uninitiated student, when we reach the end of the smooth and comfortable highway of mere academic comparison and face the rugged secondary and side trails of classroom application, "Now I've shown you the way; go ahead by yourself." The result is likely to be long confusion, frustration, and resentment. But after suitable introduction to the rough road, the student *should* try out his own pace and sense of direction.

Concerning the sharper "shock treatment" or the concentrated indoctrination in one book, which most of us fall victim to at first, we must be exceptionally wary. For after his initial fascination, the student's strongest reaction to these sudden definitions, or to the bias of any one book (and particularly the books which deal almost wholly with our errors), is variously defensive or cynical, or both. He has thought he knew what symbols were — at least two kinds. Now these definitions seem to say he was wrong, or at least extremely naive about something close to the very center of his life, his language. He runs to cover. He reacts very much as teachers of English do when they are told, after they have spent years in mastering formal grammar and feel secure in it, that formal grammar is a product of a naive eighteenth-century doctrine of correctness, inadequate both as a description of the language and as a means of teaching students how to write and speak,

<sup>17</sup>Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, p. 16.

and that, indeed, instruction in it may do more harm than good.

The fact is, of course, that the student or layman does know a good deal about symbols, even though he lacks the words and structural idea for expressing it, just as the English teacher does know a good deal about structural relationships within a sentence, even though he lacks the best vocabulary for dealing with them. Each needs to establish a more adequate hypothesis about how they work.

\* On the old familiar principle that it is best to start where students are, and move as speedily as possible to where they ought to be, why not start with the one or two aspects of *symbol* they do know, even if the twain now fail to meet in their thinking? Why not thoughtfully accept the chief evidence we find as to where they are: the extremities-of-the-spectrum definitions of the dictionary — or the popular quiz on “scientific symbols,” in one current magazine — or the picture and subcaption “*Blue Boy*, by Thomas Gainsborough . . . as a symbol of aristocratic refinement,” in another. Our job is to make the needed bridge between the scientific-symbolic *xy* and the literary-symbolic “lion for courage,” so that A-B-C’s and other familiar intermediate ranges are seen along some continuous scale. And if we go along with our analysts concerning the need for taking symbols in a context of behavior, and also with attention to intersensory play, why not begin with a medium with which they have had much experience and into which they have acquired a considerable measure of symbolic insight, even if not a vocabulary to describe it — motion pictures.

The documentary film *The River* is one of the best for this purpose.<sup>18</sup> Its Lorenz-Woodard-Thompson text, picture, and music provide a remarkable combination of scientific, social, and artistic symbols, to reach various kinds of interest and responsiveness.

If, in the preparation for showing the film, something like the following frankly rough five-point scale or spectrum is set up (where the two extremes are identifiable with the two dictionary definitions, where the scientifically-minded student

<sup>18</sup>Shorter films like the U. S. Navy’s *Film Tactics* or the still shorter Disney films on *Grain that Built a Hemisphere* or *Water* have proved good where time is more sharply limited.

can take hold with the "scientific" scale from *s* to *SY*, where the literary-minded student can take hold with the scale from "mere sign" to "Capital Symbol," and where both can consider the range from the strictly denotative intent of scientific language through the connotative reaches of literary language), the teacher will find students in reassuring agreement as to where on that scale a given scene or object in the film should be placed. The term "symbolic level" is avoided because it suggests "superior" and "inferior" levels.

	← "symbolic spectrum" →				
Arbitrary designation of symbolic scope or value	(s)	(s+)	(sy)	(sy+)	(SY)
Idiomatic designation	("mere sign")	("sign plus")	("simple symbol")	("symbol plus")	("Capital Symbol")
Example	a river	the river	Mississippi (Wabash)	Ol' Man River	River of Life
Context, value	(line on a map, denoting a river course)	(denoting the river near home, with some associations)	(symbolizing some epic or folk associations inescapable unless specifically restricted)	(literary personification)	(comic metaphor)
	Science ← ————— language of ————— → Art				

Rough as the scale is, it permits an infinite number of gradations (+ +, — —) between the points identified. The film begins on the "sign plus" level with the title, *The River*. Then with the Whitman-like words and spacious hollow music of the start we find ourselves noting familiar "mere sign" and "sign plus" factors and moving them to the "simple symbol," "symbol plus" and "Capital Symbol" range in the shots of clouds, forest, drops, rivulets, rivers, the Great River, the cutting of forests for farm lands and lumber, the "mining" of the soil for cotton, the river boats, war, the new cities and their industry, clouds again, denuded lands, rain, erosion, floods, levees, waste and sickness — and then in one branch of the sick river system, the TVA bringing the needed cure or recovery with dams, power, reforestation. It is easy to see what the music as well as the words does to alter the symbolic values of pictures. One illustration may suffice: how the logs that are sluiced from the hills down to the rivers at first are

"sign plus" ( $s^+$ ) logs that have left the hills denuded; but then, accompanied by Thompson's orchestration of "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight," become almost the "symbol plus" (Paul Bunyan?) equivalent of Ol' Man River.

Obviously, any term can shift right or left on the spectrum as it is colored cumulatively by general context or the presence of other terms.

Here, quickly, the teacher has provided a common moving experience in a most familiar medium, a scale that fills in between the extremes of the dictionary definition and provides the necessary bridge to the miscellany of definitions that should be considered after suitable discussion of this first operational stage of definition. Discussion usually reveals another bridge that seems to be lacking or inexplicit in many accounts of the symbolic process: the formulation of "inner" symbols that then must be translated into other symbolic forms (words, diagrams, and so on) before they can be communicated to others. All this is frankly hypothetical, *but students can test the hypotheses*. The classroom is itself a laboratory, as every classroom should be in this new communication field — giving body to the idea of "two-way communication," "public and private symbols" (see the *Life Magazine* symposium on "Modern Art," October 11, 1948), "symbols of culture," "patterns of culture," and other useful ideas that are in the air but need to be distilled or precipitated.

With such an operational definition in introductory meetings, students can then go on, with help, to balance key parts of the useful "negative approach" books (*The Meaning of Meaning*, *Science and Sanity*, *Language in Action*, *People in Quandaries*, even *The Tyranny of Words*), and the complementary "positive" books (*Mind, Self and Society*; *Signs, Language and Behavior*; *Philosophy in a New Key*) without either cynicism or superman feelings. Students can then consider Ogden and Richards' "triangle of meaning," Korzybski's "structural differential," Hayakawa's "abstraction ladder," Susanne K. Langer's distinction between the "discursive symbolism" of language and the "nondiscursive symbolism" of non-linguistic arts, and even Morris's debated "semantic dimension," "syntactic dimension," and "pragmatic dimension" as means of getting at symbolic phenomena.

Finally for "definition in depth" as a part of their general education, students may trace briefly the interesting growth of concern with the symbolic process on the part of the "American school" of philosophers — Peirce, James, Mead, Dewey, and Morris — in a continental scene and a cultural context where the establishment and communication of common symbols-in-action has been of major concern, and where we have, perhaps in consequence, developed the most stupendous networks of mass communication on earth, leading Mead even before 1934 to say hopefully, "Bigness may in this sense [if organization is obtained] be an indication of qualitative achievement."<sup>19</sup>

But (at least one more *but*) before we can open such materials significantly for our American students, beyond the exclamatory stage, we must achieve such very humble definitions-in-action (to be improved, one hopes, by increasingly firm definition in psychological theory) as this chapter has tried to point the need for.

Not Scientific Signs Alone; Not Only Cosmic Literary Symbols;  
• but the Whole Range of Familiar A-B-C Symbols Too.

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<sup>19</sup>Mead, *Mind, Self and Society*, p. 268.



## The Program in Communication Skills at the State University of Iowa

IN THE SPRING of 1944 the liberal arts faculty at the State University of Iowa voted that as part of its new program in general education every candidate for a bachelor of art's degree must demonstrate by examination a college-level proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking. To aid him in attaining this proficiency it established a course called Communication Skills. The faculty agreed that the fundamental purpose of such a course should be to "provide the degree of skill in writing, speaking, and reading that is necessary for effective participation in both college and noncollege life, and to furnish a basis for subsequently increased skill in these respects as knowledge and experience are enlarged." This has continued to be the principal objective of the skills program.

Consistent with this aim, the skills staff has come to recognize the following as proper subsidiary and related aims:

1. To help students develop efficient habits of college work. Inside the classroom this implies the development of proficiency in listening to lectures, taking notes, reciting, taking part in discussion, and writing examinations. Outside the classroom it implies such matters as using the library, reading textbooks, studying for examinations, writing reports, letters, and papers.

2. To help the students to recognize and employ effective expository, argumentative, and critical techniques.

3. To help the students to recognize sound judgments in the discourse of others and to employ methods leading to such judgments in their own. In more specific terms this refers to the relation in exposition between generalizations and details; the relation in argument of propositions, assumptions, and evidence; the relation in criticism of criteria, particulars, and judgments.

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By John C. Gerber, associate professor of English and chairman of Communication Skills staff, State University of Iowa.

4. To help the students recognize undue bias in the discourse of others and to be properly objective in their own. This implies some training in propaganda analysis and considerable attention to problems of attitude and slanting.

5. To increase the students' knowledge of those principles and tools of communication necessary to the continuing development of their skill after they have met the graduation requirement and are no longer registered in the Communication Skills course. This implies, first, a knowledge of the principles of efficient reading, writing, speaking, and to a lesser extent, listening; and second, a knowledge of the nature of words and their usage. To the extent that this objective is pursued, the program is a content as well as a skills program.

In formulating these objectives both the faculty as a whole and the skills staff have tried to be as specific as possible. Our desire has been to formulate objectives which in some substantial manner are realizable and progress toward which is measurable. Also, we have tried to formulate objectives toward which the work in this course as distinct from work in other courses can properly be directed. Thus these objectives must be seen in the context of the purposes and activities of the Liberal Arts College as a whole. They are at once ends for the work in the communication skills and means toward the more comprehensive goals of general education, such as the development of sound character and the encouragement of the good society.

#### OPERATING PRINCIPLES

To help achieve such objectives, the Iowa program operates on four basic principles:

1. That instruction should be as individualized as possible. What we try to do is find out what the individual student needs and then adjust his program accordingly.

2. That instruction in the several skills should be integrated rather than isolated. Reading, writing, speaking, and (within the last year) listening are studied as facets of a single process: communication. This is not to imply that those aspects of communication which are peculiar to a single skill are slighted. Within a large integrated course it is still possible, according to the student's needs, to provide specialized training in one skill.

3. That instruction should be skills-centered rather than content-centered. Texts and lectures include a considerable body

of content which the student is expected to study and to know. Most of this deals with the language and the principles of effective communication, material in short which is intimately related to the development of the student's own skill. There is no formal attempt, however, to integrate instruction in this course with instruction in literature or the social sciences, fields which are covered by other general and required courses.

4. That instruction should be directed toward practical ends. The modes of communication in which instruction is given are exposition, argument, and criticism — the everyday and practical modes. Furthermore, much of the work is aimed at such practical activities as reading textbooks and newspapers. Work in *belle lettres* is offered in the literature and creative writing courses.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

The skills courses (for there are now more than one) are college and not departmental courses. For that reason the highest governing body consists of the dean and the faculty of the Liberal Arts College. Under ordinary circumstances, however, the faculty is represented by the Committee on Curricula and Instruction and it, in turn, by the Committee on Communication Skills. The dean is the chairman of the latter committee and the members are representatives (ordinarily the heads or directors) of English, speech, psychology, journalism, the library, and the examinations service. The chairman of the Communication Skills staff serves as secretary of this committee. The committee's functions are to establish general policies for the skills program, to act on any recommendation from the skills staff, to aid in obtaining staff, and to act for the staff in faculty meetings or in meetings of the Committee on Curricula and Instruction.

The chairman of the Communication Skills staff is appointed by the dean for a term of three years and is responsible to the dean and to the Committee on Communication Skills. His functions are to carry out the general policies established by the Skills Committee; to take leadership in the staff in the development of curriculum and the improvement of instruction; to carry all staff recommendations on matters of general policy to the Skills Committee; to consult with department heads on staff appointments; to supervise a program of staff training,

encourage research, and develop morale; to handle the office budget; and to maintain relations with Iowa high schools and with those in similar programs at other colleges and universities.

Within the framework of general policy set by the Communication Skills Committee the skills staff is an autonomous group which by majority vote makes its own decisions on all matters of curriculum and instruction. It has eleven standing committees: executive, registration, examination, sectioning, staff training, course magazine, course radio program, research and course evaluation, instruction in reading, instruction in speech, instruction in writing. These committees are free to formulate proposals within their own province and to submit them to the staff for acceptance, modification, or rejection. Staff meetings occur once a week and last for an hour and a half. Customarily the first half hour is devoted to staff business, the remainder of the time to staff training.

#### DIAGNOSTIC TESTS

To determine individual needs, we ask all entering students during freshman week to take a rather extensive series of tests. The only ones excused from doing so are transfer students entering with at least six semester hours of credit in composition; these students by faculty action automatically meet the graduation requirement in communication. The tests given this past September included the following:

Test 1. An English Placement Test devised locally with the aid of the Iowa Colleges Conference on English. Although this test is generally similar to the USAFI Correctness and Effectiveness of Expression test, it differs in that the passages included represent sharply contrasting styles of writing, some quite formal, others very informal. The student is held responsible for judging which word usage and sentence structure are most appropriate in the particular style of writing in which they appear.

Tests 2, 3, 4. These are General Educational Development tests which have been given at Iowa for a number of years. They are concerned with the interpretation of reading materials in the social studies, science, and literature. Their results are used by the skills staff as an index of reading comprehension.

Test 5. General Vocabulary. This is a General Educational Development test. The words tested are presented in context.

Test 6. Reading Rate. This is a locally devised test.

Test 7. Organizing, Generalizing, and Slanting. This is a locally devised test to determine proficiency in several of the subskills of communication.

Test 8. Principles and Tools of Communication. This is a true-false test designed to measure the student's knowledge of the principles of effective communication and the elementary phenomena of language. A few items on library usage are also included. Like all of the preceding tests this one is constructed so that the answer sheets can be machine scored.

Test 9. An Expository Theme. This theme is based on an assigned subject, the subject being so constructed that no student can be without information on at least one or two aspects of it. The time limit is two hours, and the students are instructed to write at least 450 words.

Test 10. An Argumentative Speech. For this speech the student has an hour in which to prepare any one of ten assigned topics. Notes are allowed, but the student is marked down for too heavy a reliance upon them. The time limit is four minutes.

For the students, the skills staff, and the examinations service this group of tests makes a relatively full freshman week. The examinations service schedules and administers the tests, machine scores the results of all the objective examinations, and supplies the skills staff with the results in terms of percentile ranks. Meanwhile the staff reads themes and listens to speeches. Each theme is read twice, the two scores subsequently being averaged and converted into a percentile rank. Each speech is likewise rated twice, one staff member checking for over-all effectiveness and another checking for irregularities in voice and articulation. The over-all score is subsequently converted into a percentile rank. When all the grading is completed, the percentile ranks for each student are assembled on his permanent record card and used as the basis for diagnosing his special needs and assigning him to the proper course. With some pushing and considerable loss of sleep such assignments can be made for almost all of the entering students, and the advisors given the proper information, before the students register.

#### SECTIONING

The first decision to be made about any student on the basis of the diagnostic test results is whether or not he already posses-

ses what we think to be college proficiency in communication. If so, he is exempted from the skills course, and the registrar is notified that the graduation requirement has been fulfilled. Last September about five percent of the students taking the diagnostic tests were exempted from the program.

The ninety-five percent not exempted we divided three ways: about one-fifth were assigned to the five-hour, one-semester accelerated course; about three-fifths were placed in the four-hour, two-semester main course; and about one-fifth were assigned to the four-hour course in fundamentals. This basic job of sectioning is accomplished at the time of registration when on the recommendation of his advisor a student registers for one of the three courses.

In the fundamentals course, no further sectioning takes place since the instruction throughout is on a highly individualized basis. In the main and accelerated courses, however, students are sectioned within any given hour and course, again according to their apparent needs. Thus the staff's sectioning committee may decide after an examination of the permanent record cards for all students registered in the main course at 10:30 that twenty of them should go into a speech emphasis section, and forty into two reading emphasis sections, twenty into a writing emphasis section, and forty into two general sections. Such a distribution takes place the first day of school. Except for late registrants and the inevitable freshman who gets lost, classes are ordinarily ready to get under way almost immediately. Class size, incidentally, is normally twenty to twenty-two.

It should be explained here that emphasis sections are exactly what the term implies. They are sections designed for those who need proportionately more practice in one skill than in the other three. But they are not sections devoted exclusively to a single skill.

At best there are bound to be mistakes in this initial sectioning process. A student assigned to the main course may quickly demonstrate in his class work that he belongs in the accelerated program. Another student may show that instead of emphasis upon speech he really needs emphasis upon writing. At the end of the fifth week, therefore, the case of each student is reviewed, and on the recommendation of his instructor anyone who seems misplaced is resectioned. About one percent of

the students this past year were reassigned as a result of such recommendations.

Often the initial recommendation of the sectioning committee carries with it the notation that a student apparently needs more aid in a particular skill than he is likely to receive even in an emphasis section. In such an instance the student is urged to attend one of the clinics—reading, speech, or writing.

### THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

The instructional program varies with the course. In the fundamentals course, students divide their time almost equally among the writing laboratory, the reading clinic, and special speech sections. In each of these they receive what almost amounts to tutorial help. In the writing laboratory under careful supervision they learn the rudiments of expository organization and try to overcome their deficiencies in grammar. In the reading clinic they work on rate, using the Harvard training films, and on comprehension, using a number of locally devised exercises. In the special speech groups they work on the most elementary matters of oral expository presentation.

Frequently the point is raised that the isolation of the more obviously deficient students results in a loss of morale and an impossible teaching situation. That has not been our experience. Contrarily this highly individualized instruction in our fundamentals program has resulted in the best spirited groups we have. What these students need more than anything else is a feeling of confidence in work which heretofore they have found bewildering. Once that confidence is established, the technical deficiencies begin to take care of themselves. A clue to the attitude of these students lies in the fact that absences in this course are less frequent than in the other courses.

The main and the accelerated courses cover substantially the same material except that the main course takes two semesters and the accelerated only one. The kinds of communication dealt with are exposition, argument, and criticism, the emphasis being in that order. In each case the initial attack is on such aspects of the problem as purpose, types of content, common methods of organization, and special problems of language. After the initial attack students study and employ the techniques of each type of discourse with material from the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. In this way the skills assignments are tied in with other college work.

And finally, the student in a more natural situation is given free rein to explore and develop those ideas which he finds personally significant.

There is little doubt that in the early stages of our attack on any one of these three types of discourse the assignments create artificial situations. Either the student is practicing with a form or he is practicing with a particular kind of content. As a consequence, our method diverges from the approach of those who hold that the student should always be allowed to express what is within him without the inhibitions resulting from special demands upon form or content. This latter procedure is of course desirable provided the student knows how to express what is within him — which he does not or he would not be in the course. Those that argue for uncontrolled assignments even at the beginning of the course forget that reading, writing, speaking, listening — any one of them — is not a single skill but the aggregate of a number of distinct though intimately related subskills. What we call the skill itself develops only as the student gains mastery over the more important subskills. With this in mind we have devised our course so that the student is forced in his early assignments to direct his attention to some of these subskills. In expository writing, for example, this implies practice with such techniques as adaptation of idea and material to space and audience, handling ideas which require varying arrangements of material for adequate development, and eliminating undue slanting. As quickly as possible, we want the student to learn about the possibilities of form, the peculiar qualities of material. Ultimately in a more natural situation these become not only techniques of a varied presentation but drilling tools into the consciousness. Varied relations of ideas become apparent as the student learns that varied relations are possible. And varied techniques are utilized as he learns that there are such techniques and as he gains a feeling of competence in their use. Whatever is lost by the artificial character of the early assignments, we believe is more than regained by the ultimate advance in specificity of material and rigor of thinking.

A series of general lectures supplements the class work. These occur weekly in the accelerated program, biweekly in the main program. There are four main divisions in the series: (1) an introductory group of lectures on the nature of communication, (2) a group on college techniques (reading textbooks,



listening to lectures, reciting and taking part in discussion, writing examinations, and using the library), (3) a group on language (words and their form, words and meanings, words and connotation, words and usage, the "art of plain talk"), (4) a group on the mass media of communication (propaganda and advertising, the press and radio, motion pictures). As the subjects indicate, the lectures contain much of the content we think the students should carry from the course. Just as importantly, they give cohesiveness to the program and provide motivation for class discussion and class assignments. After the lecture on words and their forms, for example, the individual instructor can introduce a class unit on the development of vocabulary, knowing that the students have at least some common information and interest. Wherever it seems desirable, the lectures are accompanied by films, slides, and demonstrations.

The number and nature of class assignments depend upon the type of section. For all sections there is a minimum number of performances a semester: in reading three exercises on study methods, three exercises on reading rate, five exercises on reading comprehension; in speaking, two organized recitations, two two-minute talks, three four-minute talks, one six-minute talk, one participation in a discussion group, one voice recording; in writing, a total of at least 5,000 words distributed among five single-paragraph papers, three longer themes, one library paper, two class themes, two sets of examination-answer papers. This minimum is increased according to the type of section and the needs of the students.

Ordinarily the assignments are integrated in some such manner as this. The problem is introduced through the syllabus, a general lecture, or a brief lecture by the instructor. The students are then assigned certain pertinent reading material, either in their anthologies or in books and magazines to be found in the library. This reading material is discussed and analyzed in class. Then the students prepare talks on aspects of the subject which especially appeal to them, following whatever specific demands there happen to be for form or content. Finally, in the light of reading, discussion, and their extemporaneous talks, they write papers. The paper may or may not be a written adaptation of the talk. This is not a set pattern, but it is representative of the type of sequence used to give the varying performances coherence.

As in most freshman courses much of the class time is spent discussing and criticizing student performances. To facilitate this, speeches are occasionally recorded and played back and themes are mimeographed or thrown on a screen by an opaque projector. Occasionally, too, students evaluate one another's speeches and themes, the instructor awarding a grade not only to the original performance but to the student criticism of it.

#### MOTIVATION

One of the chief problems faced by the staff of a course like this is that the students look upon it as something to be "got through." Worse, because some are exempted, they may view the course as a penalty. Student motivation, therefore, becomes something that the staff cannot ignore. Grades help some. The graduation requirement helps more. Students know that this requirement cannot be met without a demonstration of rather considerable proficiency. They are inclined, consequently, to be somewhat more diligent in their regular assignments than they might otherwise be. The lectures, too, are useful.

There are other devices which we have found to have merit. One is a course library in which are kept books on the language, on study habits, on the mass media of communication, and on composition, speaking, and reading. From time to time, special collections are made available. For example, should several of the instructors decide to use the subject of propaganda for a series of assignments, a special collection on that subject is shelved temporarily in the skills library. A course magazine has helped. Appearing once a semester, this sixteen-page publication is written, edited, and publicized by the students with a minimum of faculty help. Such a magazine is useful in two ways; first, in motivating students to write well, since there is a certain amount of prestige attached to having one's work accepted for it; and second, in providing student work for class discussion and evaluation. A course radio program is useful for the same reasons. Usually these programs have consisted of discussion panels instead of set talks or prepared dialogue. The elimination process preceding any such program incites interest in discussion, and the program itself offers many opportunities for subsequent class analysis.

The device of exchanging instructors, especially for mid-term tests, seems to result in stronger motivation also. The

student's own instructor makes the assignments but the visiting instructor rates the speeches, reads the themes, and takes charge of the reading exercise. Because the visiting instructor can afford to be more impersonal, he usually is more rigorous in his criticism. What results is a keener realization on the part of the student of staff standards and his own deviations therefrom. Interestingly enough, another outcome seems to be a firmer bond between the student and his own instructor, who is ordinarily welcomed back as a friend and counsel.

Whatever the course projects and devices, however, the major force for right motivation must inevitably be the influence of the individual instructor upon his students. To be sure, this influence is in large part a function of his personality. Like other colleges and universities we hope to obtain instructors with the enthusiasm and patience that the job requires. But influence is also a matter of knowing a few basic techniques which need not be altogether learned by the time-consuming process of trial and error. Beginning this year we are devoting a group of staff meetings to a consideration of relevant problems of educational psychology, the discussions being led by an instructor who has taught both educational psychology and communication skills. Through such meetings we hope not only to take advantage of tested methods of motivation but to study the possibilities for new and even more effective techniques.

#### RATING OF STUDENT PERFORMANCES

Since all students must ultimately pass a comprehensive examination in order to meet the graduation requirement, it is essential that the instructional staff find a method of rating which is at once valid and reliable. The system of awarding an over-all letter grade for each speech or theme is relatively simple but relatively unreliable. Its weakness is that it does not insure a balanced judgment. The instructor gets preoccupied with spelling on one theme, grammar on another, organization on a third. To help achieve a balance, therefore, we have developed a rather detailed rating form. Speeches, for example, are rated in six ways: for purpose, content, organization, language, voice and articulation, and appearance and action. The instructor checks each of these items on a seven-point scale, and the performance grade is the total score. Thus if a student were average in all six aspects of a speech, his grade would be twenty-four. Themes are also rated in six

ways: for purpose, content, organization, sentences, diction, and mechanics. The scoring system is the same as that for speeches. Note that the first three items for theme and speech-grading are the same.

Rating forms for speeches are bound into the student's syllabus; rating forms for themes are printed on the front cover of the theme booklets which the students are required to use. Thus the need for the instructor's lugging extra sheets from class to class and from office to home is eliminated. The use of these forms varies. On regular assignments the instructors are free to use them, use them in part, or ignore them as the situation seems to justify. On any type of examination, however, these are the official forms which all members of the staff fill out completely.

There are two questions about such forms which we ourselves have raised. One is whether the form is too complicated. Granted that the need for a balanced judgment is essential, cannot such a judgment be achieved by two or three items instead of six? It is obvious that such items as purpose, content, and organization are interdependent, and that an estimate on any one is likely to be at least a partial estimate of the other two. In spite of this, we as yet have not been able to establish the fact that the scores of any combination of these correlate so highly that we can reduce the number of items and get an equally valid judgment. The same holds true for any combination of the six items. The other question is whether the rating form, despite its detail, is incomplete. Being artistic accomplishments, speeches and themes defy exhaustive analysis. The whole, one may argue, is always more than the sum of its observable and discussable parts. Although this has rather obvious pertinence for imaginative discourse and even for some types of factual discourse, we are still not ready to admit that it has too much relevance for the freshman work. At least we have not been able to detect that a bonus score for general effectiveness or any similar device has materially improved performance rating. On the contrary, we have discovered that it increases the possibility of a halo effect. The rater begins with a notion of the performance's general effectiveness and rates all the categories accordingly. What studies we have made, in short, seem to indicate that our six-item system serves our particular purposes better than anything else we have examined or tried.

## CLINICS

There are three clinics attached to the skills program at Iowa: the reading clinic, the speech clinic, and the writing laboratory. Since these operate in somewhat different fashion, they need to be discussed separately.

The reading clinic in the skills program services all those in fundamentals course and all other students registered in Communication Skills who wish to attend it on a voluntary noncredit basis. As a result about one-fourth of the students who take skills receive training in the reading clinic. They attend it in groups of about twenty-four. There they spend part of their time working on reading rate, using the Harvard training films and the equated reading materials. Part of the time they work on comprehension, developing techniques for scanning, for normal reading, and, in some cases, for the more exhaustive types of analysis. They spend some time, too, in exercises designed to provide them with techniques for increasing their vocabularies. Of all these activities the work on rate has resulted in the most satisfactory achievement. On the average the clinic doubles performance scores on reading rate without endangering comprehension. At present the clinic staff is experimenting with a somewhat new approach to the teaching of reading comprehension, but the study is in too early a stage to make any public report.

The skills speech clinic is an adjunct of the university's speech clinic which is operated by the department of speech. To it are referred all of the students who have any noticeable voice or articulation defect, regardless of the course they are in—fundamentals, main, or accelerated. The administration of the program works like this. Students who are spotted on the diagnostic examination or on subsequent class talks as having speech defects are assigned to speech emphasis sections. From these sections they are excused one day a week—a day when other students in their classes are scheduled to make talks and when they would do no more than listen—so that they may attend the clinic for individual instruction. How long they do this depends upon the severity of the disorder. It should be added that stutterers and those with serious organic disorders usually register for extra work in the speech department and thus get more aid than if they were in the skills program alone. Regularly, by both written reports and conferences, the clinicians keep the instructors informed of their stu-

dents' progress. About one-fifth of all the students registered in the skills program have one or more interviews with the speech clinicians; and about one-twentieth go regularly to the speech clinic during the time that they are registered for skills.

The writing laboratory has been operating at Iowa for many years, long before the skills course was inaugurated. At present all students in the fundamentals course are assigned to it as part of their regular work. In addition the laboratory accepts all volunteers. Upon arrival at the laboratory for the first time a student is encouraged to talk about himself and to analyze his own deficiencies. Then he is asked to do some writing so that the instructors can add their analyses to his. After that, he attends regularly two hours a week until such time as he and the laboratory staff agree that he no longer needs such special attention. Work in the writing laboratory is not formalized training in grammar. Rather, the approach is through the development of simple but orderly paragraphs. As grammatical and mechanical deficiencies show themselves, they are treated in the context of what the student is writing. Ordinarily no more than twenty students are scheduled for the laboratory at any given hour. Normally three instructors are present. About one-fourth of the students registered in skills seek help at some time or other in the writing laboratory.

At the end of the semester, each clinic turns in a report on its students. These reports are then typed on the students' permanent record cards where they are available for any of the staff or any of the college advisors.

#### TEXTBOOKS

Like most communication staffs, we have found it difficult to solve the textbook problem. Since there is no single book that does the job, we have had to manage with various combinations of books. We have our own assignment syllabus printed at cost and sold to the students through the Iowa City bookstores. In addition we use an anthology (*Better Reading*), a composition handbook (*Writer's Guide*), a speech text (*Basic Training in Speech*), and a reading text (*Preface to Critical Reading*). There is some variation in these requirements according to course and section. As a matter of fact the staff of the fundamentals course requires different texts altogether: *Effective Study* and *A Guide for Oral Communication*.

## FINAL EXAMINATIONS

Final examinations in the Communication Skills course at Iowa serve two primary functions: one is that their results are substantial factors in the determination of course grades; the other is that they indicate whether or not the student has satisfied the graduation requirement. As indicated previously, the graduation requirement must be satisfied by demonstration, not by a course grade (except for transfer students entering with over six hours of composition). The final examinations — given in the accelerated course at the end of the first semester and in the main course at the end of the second — offer the student the opportunity to make this demonstration. To meet the graduation requirement a student has to show on this examination a level of proficiency roughly equivalent or superior to C work in the course. Under this system, consequently, it is possible for a student to pass the course with a D but not satisfy the graduation requirement. In such a case he must take special work in the clinics until such time as he can demonstrate that he possesses the requisite skill.

The final examinations are similar to but not so extensive as the diagnostic tests. At present they include the following:

1. Appropriateness and Effectiveness of Expression
2. Reading Comprehension
3. Organizing, Generalizing, and Slanting
4. Principles and Tools of Communication
5. An expository theme
6. An argumentative talk

Again the objective tests are machine scored and the results translated into percentile ranks by the examinations service. In doing this the service employs the norms established in September. Thus a raw score of 45 which results in a percentile rank of 85 in September results in the same percentile rank in February or June or August. New norms are then calculated the following September.

As in September the students are given two hours for the theme, the topic being assigned at the time of the examination. For the speech the students are given a choice of several topics and an hour in which to prepare. The talk itself is limited to four minutes. Each theme is read by two instructors working independently and awarded either the average score or, when the raters differ too widely, the score they agree upon after

conference. The grade for each talk is arrived at by the same process. Using the September norms, the staff then converts the theme and speech scores into percentile ranks.

When all the scores are in and posted on the student's permanent record card, a conference is held between each student's instructor and the members of the staff's executive committee. The purpose of this conference is to determine whether the student meets the graduation requirement. Thus, whereas the course grade is determined by the individual instructor, the business of the graduation requirement is a matter of decision for the staff, as represented by its executive committee.

Incidentally a testing program like this, in which comparable tests are given before and after the course work, makes it possible to study the effectiveness of the instructional program. This year, for example, the test on Organizing, Generalizing, and Slanting and the one on Principles and Tools of Communication have been given largely to discover the effectiveness of certain curricular elements which have recently been added to the course.

### RESEARCH

With the help of the university examinations service we have conducted each year certain research projects into the nature and effectiveness of our work. In general these have been of three kinds. First have been inquiries into our rating procedures, studies designed to test the uniformity of the staff in rating and the efficiency of our rating blanks. Second have been inquiries into the effectiveness of certain aspects of the course, such as the general lectures and methods of improving reading rate. Third have been studies of the relation between the instructor's field of concentration and his ability to teach skills not normally stressed in that field. Then there have been individual studies, often for master's or doctor's theses, the results of which have often proved valuable for the staff as a whole. Some of these have dealt with listening, hearing loss, stage fright, and the testing of the ability to organize.

This is the part of the program that we hope to expand considerably in the near future. Especially we want to know more about diagnosing students' individual needs, about the relative effectiveness of our sectioning, about the handling of listening and reading comprehension, about the training of teachers for this course, about the relation between difficulties



in communication and more deep-seated personality disorders, about the relative effectiveness of the integrated course as against separate courses in English and speech. These are a few of the questions on which we — and the staffs of most courses in the field, for that matter — need evidence rather than impressions.

#### STAFF

It is platitudinous but nevertheless true that the success of this or any other course depends upon the calibre of the people teaching it. For that reason we give considerable time to the selection and training of our staff.

The Communication Skills courses do not constitute a department in the university. Rather, the staff is composed of persons who are engaged through the English, speech, psychology, and journalism departments and assigned either part-time or full-time to teach in the skills program. As a matter of fact, most instructors on the skills staff teach other basic or required courses, and all of the assistant or associate professors on the skills staff teach electives in the field of their specialization.

According to a carefully considered policy, relatively few of those assigned to teach skills are graduate assistants. Of the present staff of forty-four, only six are assistants; the others are full-time instructors, assistant professors, or associate professors. The chief reason for such a policy is that a program like this makes more demands upon its staff than just those of the classroom. There are administrative duties, research studies, and special projects of all kinds which constantly require time and energy. The instructor, therefore, must be one who is being paid to concentrate upon his teaching and upon matters relevant to his teaching, and not upon the advancement of his own graduate work. This is not to imply that most of our staff have their doctorates. A good many of them do or are within easy striking distance of them. The point is, however, that we want a teaching staff, the members of which are willing during the semesters that they teach to subordinate their graduate work when it comes into conflict with teaching activities.

Ordinarily the members of the skills staff are deployed according to their special abilities. Specialists in speech correction handle the clinic work, specialists in public speaking teach the speech emphasis sections, and so on. After several years

of experience in the course, however, a good instructor seems to be able to get results in general sections and even in some emphasis sections regardless of his graduate training. At least that is what a study of ours made two years ago would seem to indicate. The present policy, therefore, is to assign general sections to the more experienced instructors, the emphasis sections to those with some specialized experience, and clinic work to those who are highly specialized.

Since few of the staff come to us equipped to step into the program without some extra preparation, we find that we must somehow equip them ourselves. This we do in two ways, through a two-day seminar before school opens and through a regular weekly staff meeting.

Before the beginning of each fall semester we have a two-day seminar which the entire staff attends. One objective of this is to introduce the new instructors to their colleagues, to the dean and some of the department heads, and to the skills program. The other objective is to obtain some uniformity in grading before attacking the diagnostic speeches and themes of the entering students. To the latter end and after a discussion of standards and an explanation of the rating forms, the staff evaluates several representative talks and themes. Each member rates the performances independently. From these independent ratings the consensus ratings are calculated so that each instructor may see whether with respect to the staff as a whole he is overrating or underrating. If time permits, the process is repeated.

This is a training process which goes on throughout the school year in the weekly staff meetings. At least once each semester the whole staff rates the same speeches and themes (about eight of each) so that the individual can once again compare his results with the average results. By such practice and by having two independent ratings for each performance, we have been able to boost our coefficient of reliability in rating final examination themes and speeches to above .60. In actuality the figure is even higher since when two raters disagree materially they hold a conference over the performance in order to determine what the proper adjustment should be. This is a device that has been employed at the University of Chicago for some time and is one which seems to give better results than our former practice of introducing a third rater when the first two were in disagreement.

Each year, too, we hold two or three meetings on the subject of standards. Partly this is a matter of the large view, of seeing the responsibility of the skills staff to the university and to society; partly it is a matter of specifics, of determining what merits a top grade, an average grade, a bottom grade. Finally, the training program includes discussions of educational psychology, of tests and methods of testing, of research in the field, of other communication courses throughout the country, and of the nature of communication itself. Until now the staff training program has been carried on informally and without any official recognition. Faculty approval has been secured this year, however, to offer seminars for college credit in the teaching of communication skills, in educational psychology for teachers of communication skills, and in modern American English grammar. Such seminars are to be open not only to instructors in the course but to all graduate students interested in teaching in this field.

This has been a description of the State University of Iowa's program as it is in the year 1948-49. Although the program is now five years old, we still consider it experimental and have little hesitancy about changing it as our experience indicates that change is desirable. Our fundamental needs are those of every staff in the field: research on programs and techniques, the results of which will enable us to do the job more simply and effectively.

## Oral Communication in General Education

IT IS OF more than incidental importance that we here, by way of introduction, take a quick glance at the history of oral communication. That history provides evidence that the degree of emphasis placed upon oral communication is a barometric measurement of the freedom of society. It was in Sicily in 466 B.C., after democracy was established, that Corax of Syracuse formulated suggestions on public speaking to aid the Sicilian people in pleading for restitution of property taken from them by Thrasybulus. It was in the democratically governed Greek cities that Pericles and Antiphon won renown as orators and it was upon this experience that Aristotle drew to produce his great treatise on rhetoric. Cicero won admiration as an orator and respect as a rhetorical theorist during the ascendancy of the Roman Senate. It was during the development of the Cabinet and party system of government in eighteenth century England that the powerful speeches of Burke, Fox, Erskine, and Pitt were heard; it was during and shortly after this century that the important works on public address by Blair, Campbell, and Whately were written. Revolutionary and postrevolutionary America produced some of the greatest oratory of all time; issues of importance have always produced widespread public discussion and debate in this country. American colleges and universities have consistently placed emphasis upon instruction in oral communication, and it is significant that programs of general education throughout the country today are, in general, stressing the skills and understandings that enter into this important aspect of human activity.

In using the phrase "oral communication" we refer to the transmission and reception of spoken English symbols in whatever form or upon whatever occasion that two-way process

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takes place. This general expression covers any of the various kinds of speech which range, in difficulty, from the simple expository to the highly persuasive and, in formality, from that of the livingroom conversation to that of the public debate. It also denotes ability to comprehend the significance and assimilate the meaning of spoken symbols.

#### WHY ORAL COMMUNICATION IN GENERAL EDUCATION?

Why should those who espouse general education be concerned with proficiency in oral communication? In the first place, it is to a large degree through oral communication that we transmit, interpret, and vitalize our heritage of ideas, ideals, and aspirations. These are the things of which talk is made and, most frequently, the purposes for which it takes place. It was through the spoken words of Patrick Henry, Daniel Webster, Abraham Lincoln, and other eminent speakers that, in this country, the concepts of freedom and equality and individuality and the common humanity of all men were endowed with significance and persuasive force. It was through thousands of less renowned individuals, speaking in small groups and to great crowds, that these symbolic expressions of hope were carried to all manners of men in all kinds of places. It is primarily through the parent, the teacher, the minister, the candidate for office—speaking in the family circle, in the classroom, from the pulpit, and from the platform—that today man benefits from the experience of man.

Oral communication, in the second place, is a means to social action. Through speech the individual upon whom society has bestowed an education can contribute to the direction of society and the settlement of its most perplexing problems. From the speeches of LaFollette and Roosevelt and Wilson came the impetus to social reform in the United States before 1914. In the first years of World War II the words of Winston Churchill inspired a defiance of "evil men" and an acceptance of "blood, sweat, toil, and tears" which enabled the people of England to hold in check the flood of world tyranny. The words of these great speakers, however, were effective only because they were seized upon and repeated and re-emphasized by lesser speakers in market place and drawing room.

Moreover, the processes involved in oral communication—the gathering of information, the reasoning from evidence,

the organization of ideas, the oral expression of ideas, the response of auditors to the expression of those ideas — aid in the synthesis of knowledge. Oral communication, of necessity, ignores the artificial boundaries within knowledge which are created by attempts to classify knowledge. The speaker, in most cases, must draw from the entire breadth of his experience in order to inform, interest, or activate his audience. The listener, in most cases, must refer to his general store of knowledge in order to comprehend the import and assimilate the significance of spoken symbols. Thus, in this process of working and reworking knowledge, there occurs a synthesis of related areas of information which the student ordinarily receives, in spite of efforts to correlate and integrate, in neatly labeled packages.

Again, it is predominantly through oral communication that individuals in a free society cooperate in arriving at decisions concerning courses of action which, it is hoped, will solve group problems. This process is often labeled "discussion" and is the essential tool of a democratic society. It is in discussion that individual opinions are tested and through it that the thought of many individuals is fused into public policy. It is not too much to expect, therefore, that each individual who benefits from an advanced education shall have achieved a high degree of facility in use of the oral, cooperative, analytical, reflective, argumentative processes involved in group discussion.

Oral communication, in the fifth place, provides the primary means of contact through which individuals and groups adjust to each other and to changing times and conditions. It is in the process of speaking and listening that one individual or group gains insight into the ideas and attitudes and temperaments of other individuals or groups. It is through communication that economic and political groups adjust to each other and make that adjustment before conditions result in serious strife. It is by means of communication, written, oral, and graphic, that groups gain the information and inspiration that lead to social enlightenment and progress. It follows, therefore, that development of ability to communicate should be a prime objective of all education, and, in particular, of general education. An individual who is unable to speak with ease, clarity, and accuracy and who is unable to listen with comprehension and assimilation is probably lacking in abilities

that are prerequisite to social adaptation and toleration. The same may be said of individuals gathered into groups.

Furthermore, instruction in oral communication improves resistance to demagogues and dictators and subversive agitators. The only bulwark against these elements available to a democratic society is a body of citizens able to listen, evaluate, discriminate, and deny. Therefore, development of these abilities becomes a fundamental aim of programs of general education. In these programs the student of oral communication learns to distinguish between fact and opinion, between logical and emotional proofs, and between valid and invalid generalization. He gains insight into causes and effects, into the strengths and weaknesses of analogy, and into the use of deductive reasoning. He learns to recognize the techniques of the propagandist and the fallacies that can creep into argumentation. He learns how to raise his voice in refutation. As a speaker and as an auditor he sharpens his capacity to act as an informed and responsible citizen.

Lastly, emphasis upon oral communication in programs of general education is made necessary by the rapid development of modern means of communication. The telephone, the radio, and the recording machine have vastly increased the range, the frequency, and the impact of oral communication. New electronic developments will, in the future, intensify these results. Frequency modulation, for example, will increase the number of radio stations. Pulse-time modulation will increase the number of radio programs. Television will supplement the spoken word with color and form and action. Other devices will come. They are multiplying faster than we are learning how to use them. Yet we do and will use them. A busybody can pick up his telephone and spread his gossip to a whole community in a matter of minutes. A radio commentator can spread his gossip to millions of listeners in a matter of seconds. A television lens can select and slant and distort. Therefore schools, if they are to demonstrate their alertness, must graduate students who are not only honest, reflective, responsible, and skillful communicators but also intellectually and artistically critical recipients of communication.

#### WHAT ARE THE CONSTITUENT SKILLS OF ORAL COMMUNICATION?

In order to teach effectively it is necessary to arrive at an analysis of the constituent skills of oral communication.

These skills are, roughly, eleven in number: (1) skill in controlling emotions, (2) skill in articulation and pronunciation, (3) skill in the use of voice, (4) skill in the use of visible aspects of oral communication, (5) skill in adaptation to audience, (6) skill in the use of oral language, (7) skill in the use of thought processes involved in the discovery, selection, and organization of proofs, (8) skill in the composition of speech materials, (9) skill in responsible use of speech, (10) skill in reading to an audience, and (11) skill in listening.

#### *Skill in controlling emotions*

By skill in control of emotions we imply that the student is able to counteract the forces which tend to make of him an inarticulate, confused, and trembling communicator. In order to achieve this skill the student must understand, first, the naturalness and universality of feelings commonly lumped together under the label of "stage fright," second, their basic value, and third, their causes. Having completed this analysis the student can be led, by means of reflective discussion, bibliography, and carefully planned classroom speaking experiences, into the state of controlled tension necessary for good oral communication.

#### *Skill in articulation and pronunciation*

Skill in articulation and pronunciation means that the student is able to produce the sounds of the English language in connected speech clearly, distinctly, accurately, rhythmically, and in a manner that does not distract his auditors. Conservatively stated, at least twenty percent of the students in the freshman class of any university will suffer from this kind of speech deficiency. The problems will range in severity all the way from substitution, addition, omission, or distortion of sounds to severe stuttering. Some of these problems can be remedied in the classroom situation, but most of them require individual and small group therapy in the speech clinic. Rarely do these difficulties remedy themselves; they can be eradicated or improved only under competent supervision.

#### *Skill in the use of voice*

A good speaking voice is characterized by pleasing quality, wide range of flexibility, agreeable pitch, and adequate projection. Although possible and perhaps important in some instances, it is not necessary here that we define the abstract



terms "pleasing," "wide range," "agreeable," and "adequate" in terms of decibels, wave lengths, or harmonics. Ordinarily a voice has a pleasing quality if it is resonant and not afflicted with harshness, hoarseness, nasality, or breathiness. A flexible and varied voice is one characterized by perceivable and appropriate emphasis, inflection, intonation, and rhythm, by an absence of pattern in these characteristics, and by absence of monotony in rate, pitch, and loudness. Agreeable pitch can be defined as that sound-wave frequency which is neither so high nor so low that it becomes disconcerting to an audience. A well-projected voice is one that can be heard in the situation in which it is being used. All in all, the voice is a delicate and responsive instrument, which, when properly used, has a wider range of communicative potentiality than any written or printed symbol or any man-created instrument. A voice that lacks some or all of the characteristics of which we speak cannot adequately convey meaning. A monotonous voice, for example, will not have at its command those subtle inflections and modes of emphasis which convey more meaning than a dozen written or spoken words. The person who cannot be heard is, under no pretense, a communicator. An unpleasant voice exhausts an audience; the attention of the listener either becomes focused upon the voice or attempts to resist its irritation; in either case, the message of the speaker is lost.

#### *Skill in the use of visible aspects of oral communication*

Oral communication has certain visible aspects which, of themselves, convey meaning; they also emphasize, reinforce, and clarify the meaning communicated by the spoken word. Visible components of oral communication are of two kinds: bodily action and visual aids. The various kinds of bodily action — posture, movement, gesture, and facial expression — are, fundamentally, responses to the speaker's mental-emotional processes. Although natural responses, these actions, if they are to convey the intended message, ordinarily need to be improved and coordinated. The same may be said of the use of visual aids. Rare is the individual who, without instruction, is able to utilize charts, graphs, pictures, and objects in a way that is convenient both for the audience and himself, and, at the same time, remain in contact with the audience and responsive to it.

*Skill in adaptation to audience*

Oral communication is carried on with a specific audience on a specific occasion for a specific purpose. This statement has greater significance than may be apparent upon casual reading. It implies a number of principles that are fundamental to all speech. It implies that speech preparation must take place with a specific audience in mind—whether that audience is to be a prospective employer or a vast throng assembled in Madison Square Garden. It implies that the speaker must be able to adapt his prepared material to any condition or situation that may arise during an attempt at communication. It implies that any given attempt at communication must be evaluated in respect to the degree to which it accomplishes its purpose with a specific audience on a specific occasion. The high-flown oratory of Daniel Webster, for example, may or may not be good public address today. That basis of evaluation, however, is immaterial. The question is this: Did Webster analyze his audience and then adapt his theses, his speech organization, his proofs, his language, and his delivery to an immediate audience in order to accomplish a definite purpose at a specific time? Awareness of audience and adaptation of speech to audience must exist as primary and paramount considerations in all attempts to teach oral communication.

*Skill in use of oral language*

One needs but hear, on the same subject, an extemporaneous speech delivered and a theme read to recognize that there are, in each of these forms of communication, characteristics of language which effect the quality of each as it is intended to be. These differences were remarked upon by Aristotle in his *Rhetorica*. Subsequent investigation, though inadequate, indicates that spoken language utilizes more variation in the kind and length of sentences, more extensive use of personal pronouns, greater frequency of repetition, and a more profuse style. Also spoken language exhibits those characteristics which result from its need to be instantly adaptable and instantly intelligible.

*Skill in use of thought processes*

In order to obtain information the individual must be able to read, observe, and listen with some degree of comprehension. Unless he is able both to apprehend and comprehend the in-

formation which lies about him, the individual can never achieve an acceptable level of communicative skill. It becomes mandatory then that any program of instruction in communication diagnose, as a first imperative step, the condition of the individual's sensory mechanism. Next, it is necessary to evaluate his ability to comprehend the information furnished by his senses. Beyond this it is important to determine his ability to assimilate new facts into his immediate store of information. Those individuals who have deficiencies in reading or listening should be referred to appropriate clinics. Perhaps the time will come when we will attempt to improve skill in other aspects of observation.

The process of discovering, selecting, and organizing speech materials is a continuous task which both precedes and follows a decision as to purpose and thesis. Thought processes are, of course, involved in that task. The student must be able to recognize the relation of evidence to proposition; he must be able to infer from both specific instances and general truths; he must be able to relate evidence and reasoning, both logically and psychologically, to the work at hand. The degree to which he accomplishes this task determines, in large measure, the quality of his communicative effort.

#### *Skill in speech composition*

After discovering his evidence the speaker must be able to combine, for extemporaneous delivery, his logical, emotional, and personal proofs into a unified whole. This total communicative effort must be characterized by coherence, emphasis, repetition, transition, movement, and climax.

#### *Skill in responsible use of speech*

The disciplining influence of awareness of consequence should be a major objective of all instruction in communication. Each student, in writing or speaking, should be held to strict accountability for statement. He should recognize that he is answerable to society for irresponsible reports and hasty generalizations which obscure fact and throw obstacles in the way of reflective thought. He should recognize that this responsibility is as distinctly an obligation of the housewife and shopkeeper as it is an obligation of the school teacher and statesman. He should realize that we are all morally bound, in any communicative situation, to exercise zealous effort at voluntary self-discipline. He should learn that by

practicing discrimination in listening and by accepting responsibility for statement we can prevent any need for curbs upon freedom of expression.

### *Skill in reading to an audience*

Reading is a frequently used form of oral communication. Although the loosening of family ties has decreased the amount of oral reading done within the family circle, it still remains an oft-used method of sharing enjoyment of the printed page. Its occurrence has probably increased in business circles; the reading of dictated letters by secretaries, the reading of minutes, the reading of reports, and the reading of resolutions are but a few examples of resort to this form of communication. Also oral reading is the universally practiced technique of communication via radio. Despite its frequency of use, however, good oral reading is less often heard than good speaking. Oral reading requires abilities in the interpretation of printed words, abilities in the handling of materials, and abilities in the projection of meaning to an audience that are somewhat different from abilities required to carry on extemporaneous speech. It is necessary, therefore, to provide instruction which will develop these special skills.

### *Skill in listening*

Teachers of oral communication cannot avoid placing emphasis upon listening. Forty-five percent of the time devoted to communication by adults is spent in listening. Thirty percent of this time is devoted to speaking, sixteen percent to reading, and nine percent to writing.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, communication, in the true sense of the word, is cyclic; anything classified as oral communication involves the reciprocal response of both a speaker and a listener. The speaker attempts to secure attention, hold interest, and provide his listeners with points of view worth attending to. The listener concentrates upon the speaker's words, assimilates them into his own thinking, and responds to their impact. The speaker observes and interprets the listener's response. Guided by that response, the speaker adapts his approach, his proofs, his language, and his delivery toward the accomplishment of his objective. The listener continues to respond; the speaker continues to adapt; thus is set up what might be called a communicative cycle.

<sup>1</sup>Paul T. Rankin, "Listening Ability," *Proceedings of the Ohio State Educational Conference*, Columbus, 1929, pp. 172-83.

That cycle is not complete unless the intensity of listening is proportionate to the intellectual challenge of the speech.

Although audience considerations have always entered into instruction in speech, major emphasis has been focused upon methods by which the speaker can analyze, adapt to, and reach that audience. Relatively little emphasis has been placed upon improving the ability of the listener to receive the communication of the speaker. It has been assumed that a listener who is able to *apprehend* aural symbols is, in the same degree, able to *comprehend* and *assimilate* them. The fallaciousness of this assumption, however, is apparent to any individual who has had occasion to check upon the accuracy with which he is able to communicate with an auditor. The replies that come back to classroom lecturers on examination papers, in spite of the most intense care in preparation and presentation, indicate that there are significant differences in ability to receive the import of the spoken word. Studies under way or completed at the State University of Iowa, the University of Minnesota, Ohio State University, and Florida State University seem to verify this conclusion. Nichols, for example, in his investigation of "*factors accounting for differences in comprehension of materials presented orally in the classroom*," tested the listening ability of two hundred college freshmen and found that their scores "ranged from twenty-nine to sixty-four, with a mean score of 49.07."<sup>2</sup>

Less than fifteen research projects in listening comprehension have been completed to date. Evidence thus far obtained, however, indicates that there is a listening problem, that certain factors do influence listening comprehension, that listening ability is a rich field for investigation, and that the teaching of listening provides an intriguing area in which to develop and test methods of instruction. Nichols found evidence to indicate that thirteen factors definitely influence the comprehension of informative material presented orally in the classroom: intelligence, reading comprehension, recognition of correct English usage, size of the listener's vocabulary, ability to make inferences, ability to see the organizational plan of the speech, listening for main ideas as opposed to specific facts, use of special techniques to improve concentration, real interest in the subject discussed, emotional adjustment to the speaker's

<sup>2</sup>Ralph G. Nichols, "Factors in Listening Comprehension," *Speech Monographs*, XV (1948), 117.

thesis, ability to see significance in the subject discussed, physical fatigue of the listener, and audibility of the speaker. Future studies should carry investigators into the effect of attitudes, interests, beliefs, and prejudices upon listening efficiency, into the effect of purpose in listening upon comprehension, into the effect of habits of recall and reflection upon comprehension and assimilation, into the effect of both rate and accuracy of symbolic interpretation upon comprehension, and finally, into the effect of the listener's range of symbolic, sensory, and imaginative experience upon comprehension.

Although further studies into the nature of the problem, into causative factors, and into affecting conditions are needed before thoroughly successful methods of training for listening can be devised, it is not too early to experiment with retraining techniques. Three procedures, it seems, are indicated: (1) diagnostic tests of skill in listening comprehension administered to all incoming students, (2) placement in listening clinics or in listening emphasis sections for those having marked deficiency in listening ability, and (3) increased emphasis upon listening skill in speech classes.

In the freshman communications course on the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota, for example, the listening course is developed around ten major units: "(1) efficient listening as economy in learning, (2) four systems of notetaking, (3) structuralizing the speech, (4) the support of one point, (5) the desire to learn, (6) the nature of concentration, (7) techniques for improving comprehension, (8) fear (inadequacy and insecurity) and its influence upon listening efficiency, (9) physical conditions related to efficient listening, and (10) listening techniques proved successful."

In the speech division of the communications program at Florida State University each speech assignment is accompanied by a listening assignment. The type of listening assignment is dictated by the nature of the speaking assignment. Students are rated upon their listening skill as well as upon their speaking skill. Concentrated instruction at the beginning and throughout the course aims to reduce social fear. Members of the listening audience practice methods of notetaking, outline speeches and compare their outlines with that of the speaker, discuss their attitudes toward the speaker's thesis, provide information which supplements that contributed by

the speaker, take issue with arguments presented by the speaker, evaluate the forms of proof and the validity of the reasoning used by the speaker, fill out change-of-attitude blanks, report to the speaker upon characteristics of his speaking which aided or interfered with the reception of his ideas, take scrambled outline tests and objective tests prepared by the speaker on the content of his speech, and make written reports voluntarily to the instructor upon conditions that interfere with their listening efficiency. These classroom activities are supplemented by specific radio and lecture listening assignments. Diagnostic tests administered at the beginning and end of the course indicate the improvement in listening skill.

WHAT LEVEL OF SKILL IN ORAL COMMUNICATION  
SHOULD THE PROGRAM OF GENERAL EDUCATION  
ATTEMPT TO ACHIEVE?

The answer to this question will be determined by the objectives established for any particular program of general education. If ability "to communicate thought" is declared to be an ultimate goal of general education, that statement must be followed, first, by an explanation of its specific implications, second, by the selection of curricular offerings and instructional methods which seem likely to accomplish these more specific aims, and third, by the development of techniques of evaluation which measure the degree of success achieved by the use of that content and those methods. Instruction which suffers from a lack of well-defined objectives will be carried on in an atmosphere of uncertainty. Even when possessed of a philosophy, instruction is frequently rendered sterile by reverence for traditional content and by lack of insight into effective method. Once objectives have been established, evaluative devices can be originated. Measurement of this kind, of course, is simply a matter of finding a technique to determine the degree to which was accomplished what one wanted to accomplish.

The objectives of instruction in oral communication in programs of general education aim, in general, to develop in the student, first, those skills of speaking and listening which will serve him well inside and outside the college classroom and, secondly, those skills which will enable him to meet the demands upon communicative ability imposed by the duties of informed and active citizenship. More specifically, it is expected that the educated citizen will be able to function

with ease and strength in the conversational situation, the interview, the application, or the conference; it is expected that he will be able to instruct and inform in either a formal or an informal situation; it is expected that he will be able to both lead and participate in the cooperative oral discussion that seeks to find a solution to social problems; it is expected that he will have achieved at least an average degree of facility in the use of reasoning processes; it is expected that he will be able to conduct a group meeting according to accepted rules of procedure; it is expected that he will be able to listen with intensity and comprehension and assimilation. Even these simple aims become a big order. They are not accomplishable with most students in one quarter or one semester of instruction. But can we expect less from a free and educated individual in our society?

#### WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION?

One hears it stated occasionally that there is no essential difference between the skills involved in oral communication and the skills involved in written communication. This point of view not only ignores the observations of a long and respectable line of rhetorical theorists — of whom Corax, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian were the earliest — but also denies the great body of research into oral communication consummated since 1900.

Usually those who hold this opinion have focused their attention upon the area of instruction in which the two skills seem to overlap. This area is concerned with language, subject, reasoning, and organization. Therefore, it may be wise to examine briefly each of these aspects of communication. It is true, ordinarily, that we use the same language in writing and speaking — but with differences which obviously classify any one communicative effort as either written or oral expression. It is true that we frequently speak and write about the same thing — but the speaker communicates under conditions which demand techniques of composition not required of the writer. It is true that similar skills are employed in the discovery of proof and in the use of modes of reasoning — speech, however, more frequently than writing, is employed for purposes that require the immediate use of varied forms of proof and complex modes of reasoning. It is true that similar skills are used in the organization of written and spoken communication —



but with striking differences made necessary by the differences between a listening audience and a reading individual. Here the similarities end. On either side of this area of likeness lie great areas of difference. The instructor in oral communication is concerned with adjustment of the individual to the impact of the audience situation, with voice, articulation, and pronunciation, with visible aspects of oral communication, with audience analysis, with the skills involved in oral reading, and with that multitude of detail that enters into effective speech. The instructor in written communication is concerned with spelling, the marks of punctuation, the paragraph, and the techniques of footnoting. Each is relatively unconcerned with the skills that distinctly differentiate one area from the other.

There are then very real differences between these two forms of communication. Consequently, programs of instruction in communication, if they are to accomplish their purpose, must consider these differences, emphasize them, and provide the student with instructors who are capable of teaching them.

#### SHOULD THE COURSE IN COMMUNICATION FOCUS UPON SKILL OR UPON CONTENT?

In order not to become entangled in words in discussing this question, we need to arrive at some preliminary understandings. The most important is this: Instruction in oral communication is concerned with two kinds of content. The first kind of content is that body of fact which instructs the student in the principles and procedures of effective oral communication. It is this body of fact that teaches the student how to reason from and about the second kind of content and also how to present that communicable content to a listening audience. In actuality it is a more complex form of content than that found in so-called "content courses." It requires of the student no less intensity of application and no less intellectual vitality than that demanded by other studies in the curriculum. The second kind of content is that body of fact and reasoning which the student communicates to his listeners. It is upon this body of content that the instructor in oral communication focuses his knowledge of tests of fact and tests of reasoning. It is this body of content that the speaker must present in a way that encourages belief in its authenticity. It is the raw material out of which is woven whole cloth.

The second important understanding concerns controversy over "skill" and "content" courses. To those who understand the dynamics of education, these controversies are mere conflicts over words. The difference, in most cases, between "content" courses and "skill" courses is simply a difference in emphasis. A so-called "content" course, if it is virile, must accept as one of its purposes the development of "skill." Why, one might ask, does the physician study anatomy? Likewise, a so-called "skill" course, if it is effective, will have a close relationship to "content." The skill with which the physician makes an incision, removes an appendix, and closes the wound is certainly not unrelated to his knowledge of anatomy, yet is, within limits, independent of that knowledge. Similarly, the real test of a lawyer's ability is his proficiency in handling a body of factual content — selecting evidence, reasoning from and about that evidence, organizing it, and presenting it appropriately to a particular judge or jury. We have here neither a question of educational importance nor a question of educational respectability; it is a question of educational method. The problem is one of stating objectives and then indicating where along the continuum from pure "skill" to pure "content," if such exist, lies the most effective emphasis of instruction.

The course in oral communication should be a skill-focused course. Thus centered it places emphasis upon the knowledge and reasoning and skill involved in *how* to communicate. Thus centered it seeks to provide the student with guidance in how to increase his store of information, how to reason from and about that information, and how to present the product of his research and reasoning to a particular audience at a specific time for a clearly defined purpose. As a skill-centered course its basic philosophy is that of learning by doing, its emphasis is upon the management and use of knowledge, and its procedures are intrinsically dynamic and vital.

Some programs of instruction in communication tend to limit the subject matter about which students write and speak to a specified area of knowledge. It is argued that this plan allows the instructor to criticize more adequately the communicable content of the act of communication.

In the view of this writer, however, this artificial limitation not only denies the basic philosophy of general education but

ignores fundamental principles that underlie all instruction in communication. To expect the student to be broadly educated and at the same time argue that the college instructor is not sufficiently so educated to evaluate the facts which a freshman student attempts to communicate is indeed a strange anomaly. A point of view that circumscribes the subject matter of communication must feel strangely out of place in a program of general education which aims to develop broadness of outlook, understanding, and perspective. It is a philosophy of defeatism which ignores the contribution that instruction in communication can make to the synthesis and utilization of knowledge. It violates the certain fact that the best communication springs from the interests and inspirations of the communicator. It ignores the fact that good instruction in communication will teach the student how to establish the truth of his remarks. It admits failure to use the listening audience as a critical recipient of communication. It cannot be condoned either by philosophy of general education or by philosophy of educational method.

The subject matter which students are allowed to use for the purpose of communication should be as broad as their information and their interests. If so, the course in communication will achieve a maximum of intrinsic motivation and a maximum of desirable carry-over. If not, the course in communication will need to be artificially and forcibly motivated — a condition that does not forecast a very bright future for the effectiveness of instruction in it.

#### WHAT PROCEDURES SHOULD BE FOLLOWED IN TEACHING THE SKILLS OF ORAL COMMUNICATION?

Thus far we have considered (1) a few of the reasons for education in oral communication, (2) the constituent skills of oral communication, (3) the level of skill in oral communication to be achieved by programs of general education, (4) the relationship between oral and written communication, and (5) the skill-content emphasis of oral communication. We now turn to a discussion of procedures used in teaching oral communication. In so doing we will limit our consideration to those procedures most characteristic of instruction at the freshman-sophomore level. In some respects, instruction in oral communication at the junior-senior or graduate level differs in objective and method from instruction at the lower level.

The communicative ability of students who enter most institutions of higher learning will range all the way from sheer inarticulateness to a fairly high level of competence. A few of them (roughly ten to fifteen percent) will have developed a relatively adequate level of communicative skill. Most of them will have deficiencies in speaking and listening which make it impossible for them to benefit fully from college work.

In addition to differences in skill, the students who enter our colleges and universities differ in their desire to improve, in their ability to profit by instruction, and in their effort to maintain and raise the level of skill at which they are dismissed from courses in oral communication.

This state of affairs suggests that programs of instruction in oral communication be distinguished by six procedures: (1) diagnostic testing, (2) adaptation to individual differences, (3) use of functional methodology, (4) use of motivating activities, (5) requirement of a standard level of achievement, and (6) follow-up of the student.

#### *Diagnostic testing*

Every student who enters the college or university should receive a diagnostic examination of his skill in oral communication. This diagnostic examination will reveal (1) his immediate level of skill in oral communication, (2) his strengths and weaknesses in the constituent skills of oral communication, and (3) his individual instructional needs.

The diagnostic examination of ability in oral communication should consist of six parts: (1) an examination of hearing acuity, (2) an examination of phonetic accuracy, (3) an examination of ability in reasoning and ability in organization of ideas, (4) an examination of ability in reading to an audience, (5) an examination of ability in speaking to an audience, and (6) an examination of ability in listening while in an audience.

The examination of hearing acuity should be made, if possible, through the use of a pure tone audiometer. Equipment will be available in the near future which will enable the audiometrist to test groups of thirty or forty individuals on a pure tone audiometer at the same time.

A screening check of phonetic accuracy can be made rapidly by having each student read sentences loaded with the eleven

most frequently misarticulated sounds of the English language. A more thorough examination can be made of those students who, in the screening check, display articulatory deviations that spread beyond these eleven sounds. Although an examination that focuses solely upon articulation is preferable, some instructors, in order to save time, check phonetic accuracy during the examination of ability in reading to an audience or the examination of ability in speaking to an audience.

The examination of ability in reasoning and ability in organization may be a written examination. It should check ability to reason both inductively and deductively. Also it should test ability to organize facts into proper chronological, topical, or logical order.

Ability to make use of the skills involved in communication from the printed page can be tested by having the student read a paragraph of prose material to his examiners. Attention is focused upon skill in interpretation of printed symbols and upon skill in projecting that interpretation to an audience through the use of proper phrasing, emphasis, inflection, rate, and other techniques.

Ability to speak to an audience may be tested by having the student deliver a short speech. The nature and difficulty of this diagnostic speech will be assigned at the level of skill at which the student would be exempted from the course.

Perhaps the only practical way to arrive at an evaluation of oral reading ability and speaking ability is to have the student rated by trained experts. These experts will have arrived at a precise understanding of the standards against which they are measuring the student's ability and will have listened to, rated, and compared their ratings of enough students to coincide quite closely in their evaluations. Usually these evaluations are made upon special rating blanks; a number which indicates degree of development is assigned to each of the constituent skills of oral communication.

The listening examination may be an objective test over the content of a short lecture. The objective test will evaluate the student's ability to comprehend what was said and to assimilate the content of that lecture into the fund of knowledge about which and by means of which he reasons.

Upon completion of this battery of examinations, the materials (audiogram, articulation check blank, reasoning examination rank, oral reading rating blank, speech rating blank)

for each student can be assembled and, after careful study, an accurate picture of his communicative ability established.

### *Adaptation of instruction to individual differences*

Once a complete analysis has been made of the communicative strengths and weaknesses of each student, it is possible to adapt instruction to individual differences. Those students who have achieved a level of skill commensurate with or above a predetermined standard may be exempted from the basic courses in oral communication and allowed to enter advanced courses. Students who have not yet reached this level may be enrolled in course sections which place emphasis upon the particular skills in which they are deficient. One student, for example, may have a serious articulatory defect. He is assigned to a correctionist in the speech clinic. Another may have trouble in organizing his ideas in a communicative situation. He is placed in a course section which emphasizes that type of remedial work. In these special emphasis sections, the student should receive individual guidance in his efforts at self-improvement. Instructional content should be adapted to his needs; communicable content should be adapted to his interests.

### *Functional methodology*

The objectives of instruction in oral communication at the freshman-sophomore level are almost invariably utilitarian and the procedures basic and intense. The courses should be taught by instructors who find stimulation in guiding the student step-by-step through a succession of experiences which lead to clear, logical, purposeful communication. The courses should be taught by instructors who also are constantly on the alert to discover more efficient methods of achieving desired results. The classroom should become a laboratory for self-improvement in which the textbook and teacher provide motivation and guidance. Full advantage should be taken of special libraries and visual aids. Recording machines and other mechanical devices should be made available for the use of the student. Classroom activities should be stimulating, purposeful, and productive of results. The problems encountered in adapting instruction to a multitude of individual differences should become very real challenges to teaching skill.

### *Motivating activities*

Good instruction in oral communication will provide motivating activities. Inspired teachers, free use of mechanical

equipment, special libraries, visual instruction, and purposeful methodology, in themselves, are stimulating to the student. Usually these conditions are adequate to supply any needed spur to effort. Sometimes, however, when the student seems unable to supply them for himself, the instructor will find it beneficial to provide reasons for self-improvement. Frequently this motivation can be supplied through supplementary activities like extemporaneous speaking contests, original oratory contests, participation in radio drama, participation in radio discussion, public appearances before service groups, and various kinds of club activities.

#### *Evaluation of achievement*

At the end of any prescribed period of time, usually a quarter or a semester, the achievement of the student should be evaluated. This evaluation can be accomplished by the use of diagnostic tests similar to those that were administered upon matriculation. (The hearing test, in most cases, can be delayed at this point.) Upon evaluation of the results of this battery of tests, the student, if he has reached the required level of skill, can be dismissed from further work in the basic skills of oral communication and allowed to enroll in higher level courses, or, if he has not reached that standard, can be asked to continue his work in some special emphasis section of the communications program. It seems only right that each student, with due regard for handicaps, should be expected to reach and maintain this standard of skill before he is awarded a degree.

#### *Follow-up of the student*

Even though he has once achieved a useful level of skill in oral communication, the student may backslide. These skills must constantly be used; inactivity, carelessness, or bad environmental conditions will frequently result in a decline in skill. Therefore, in order to prevent this decline, two plans are proposed: (1) referral of the student back to the course by instructors who observe that he is inadequately using the skills of oral communication, and (2) referral of students back to the course who fail to pass examinations administered periodically throughout the remainder of their college career.

#### IN CONCLUSION

This paper has purposely concentrated upon an exposition of oral communication as such because the writer regrets the

misconceptions that so frequently vitiate instruction in it. A knowledge of the whys and wherefores, the constituent elements, and the basic concepts of instruction in oral communication must be had before plans can be laid, courses constructed; or methodology devised. A tool as vital to effective citizenship as oral communication deserves as much understanding and as much attention as possibly can be awarded to it.



# The Minnesota Communication Program

LIKE OTHER COURSES in communication, that for first-year students in the arts college of the University of Minnesota has as its general objective the development of the student's ability to communicate effectively in the English language. But, to a greater extent than elsewhere, in the Minnesota program general effectiveness in the recognized communication skills is held to rest upon an understanding of the linguistic process itself and especially upon an understanding of the forces tending to block or modify the functioning of this process when it operates through the mass mediums of communication.

## BACKGROUND

The present program, that for 1948-49, is the product not only of the original planning before the course was initiated but also of modifications that have seemed desirable and expedient in practice.

The original planning engaged the prolonged attention of about thirty persons during the academic year of 1944-45. In that year several major interdepartmental committees of the College of Science, Literature, and the Arts studied problems in general education as they affected the arts college curriculum. These committees, appointed by Dean T. R. McConnell, were under the chairmanship of Russell M. Cooper, assistant dean for the junior college. One of these committees, that on communication, with Professor Tremaine McDowell of the department of English as chairman, was specifically charged with determining the advisability of instituting in the arts college a general education course which would offer both speech and written composition on the freshman level.

Over a series of meetings this committee on communication conducted an intensive investigation of the problem. Separate subcommittees, on the basis of the special knowledge and study of the members and with the aid of consultants invited from the faculty at large, provided information and counsel on the

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following topics: reading, evaluation of radio and newspaper communication, thinking (including both informal logic and semantics); speaking, writing, articulation with high school English, and correlation with the various arts college departments and with other colleges in the university.

In the light of this information and counsel and after thorough discussion of the situation as a whole the committee concluded that to meet more effectively the needs of the freshman student such a course in speaking and writing was desirable. It proceeded to draw up a statement proposing the suitable approach and content for the course. Late in the spring of 1945 the arts college faculty received this proposal from Professor McDowell, acting for the committee, discussed it at some length, and finally approved it.

In summary, this proposal called for an experimental period of two years for the course, set it up on a parallel basis with Freshman English, with equivalent credit acceptable by all units of the university, stipulated that each student should do eight pieces of writing and deliver two oral exercises each quarter, directed course reading into the areas of fact and opinion, required two 20- to 30-minute student-instructor conferences each quarter, called for weekly staff meetings, and indicated that the direction of the course should be in the hands of an interdepartmental committee.

In September 1945 the new course in communication was begun. That first experimental year exposed some inadequacies and revealed opportunities for improvement. Accordingly, in the three succeeding years several changes have been made. These changes have been in detail but not in general emphasis. They will appear in the following material descriptive of what the course includes, how it is staffed, how it is administered, and what testing has been done.

## CONTENT

In material given to the student at the beginning of the first quarter the communication program is described thus:

The year's work will include elementary consideration of the principles by which meaning is conveyed verbally, of the principles of sound linguistic usage, of the principles of organizing materials for communication, and of the principles of persuasion. Study will be made of the press and of the

radio, and, briefly, of the motion picture, as agencies by which information is transmitted and modified and by means of which opinions and attitudes are formed.

This program rests upon a number of assumptions. It is assumed, for instance, that communication is a socially necessary activity, since one learns through listening and reading, and reaches and influences others through speaking and writing. It is assumed that the primary function of linguistic communication is to convey meaning. Before one can communicate, he must want to know something or to tell something which is interesting and meaningful. In communication the common denominator is the use of language, either directly as in speech or indirectly as in the written representation of speech. Writing, reading, listening, and speaking are therefore related in certain essentials, notably those which concern meaning and social effects. It is profitable, then, to study them and to practice them at the same time and in relationship to one another.<sup>1</sup>

It is assumed also that it is more important to get meanings from listening and reading, and to put sound meanings into speaking and writing, than to observe conventions of usage. But since usage is a form of social behavior, the significant corollary is that failure to observe its conventions may at times confuse meanings and at other times reflect unfavorably upon the speaker or writer. Acceptable language standards depend upon appropriateness to the user, to the subject, and to the situation, rather than upon arbitrary rules. Furthermore, most language settings are informal, so that informal language standards are usually more effective.

Peculiarly distinguishing the course is the assumption that in a democratic society some meanings which are conveyed through public and semipublic agencies and organizations to great masses of people are of social importance. The imperative corollary is that citizens in such a society, where public opinion is significant in government, obtain some understanding of the special characteristics of these agencies insofar as they produce or affect the meanings which they convey. Only with such understanding can the adult citizen exercise critical discrimination in receiving mass communication calculated to influence his opinion and attitudes. Only with such understanding,

<sup>1</sup>For a fuller statement of the writer's views see H. B. Allen, "Making the Freshman Course Really Comprehensive," *English Journal* (Coll. Ed.), XXVIII (March 1939), 192-99.

furthermore, can he intelligently provide active, direct, and constructive criticism of the mass communication agency. And such constructive criticism by many people, supporting the privately owned mass medium while stimulating its awareness of its social responsibility, is necessary to help decrease undesirable private, group, and governmental influence upon press and radio and, conversely, to increase upon it the desirable effect of enlightened public opinion.<sup>2</sup>

These assumptions and corollaries provide the framework upon which is constructed the specific content of the communication course. The fact that Minnesota operates upon the quarter system leads to a somewhat arbitrary but yet convenient presentation of this content in three units.

The emphasis during the first quarter is upon the linguistic process. The student approaches language as a conventional system of symbols for the social communication of meaning. His attention is directed to both the symbolic and the non-symbolic uses of language and to the affective value of words. He is encouraged to acquire the scientific attitude toward matters of language usage and to learn how to form his own linguistic judgments in accord with his observation. At the same time he learns inductively to organize larger masses of material than he presumably has dealt with heretofore. Writing and speaking during this quarter are of the class generally termed "expository," and stress is laid upon clarity of thought and of language in the communication. Hence only the sentence outline is permitted.<sup>3</sup>

The second quarter's emphasis is upon the use of language in logical organization to influence behavior. The student studies both elementary logic and formal argument, on the one hand, and informal argument and the means of psychological persuasion, on the other. He learns the effective use of the brief as a testing structural device and the difference

<sup>2</sup>See Earl L. Vance, "The News: Fourth Dimension of College Education," *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors* (Autumn '94), 510165. For an enlightening report of the reaction of one segment of the press to an educational program in which critical discrimination in news reception is taught, see Leonard Lyons, "Labeling our Colleges," *Atlantic Monthly*, CLXXXIII (January 1949), 39-42.

An excellent bibliography appears in Bruce L. Smith, Harold D. Lasswell, and Ralph D. Casey, *Propaganda, Communication, and Public Opinion: A Comprehensive Reference Guide*, Princeton University Press, 1946.

<sup>3</sup>See H. V. S. Ogden, "On Teaching the Sentence Outline," *College English*, X (December 1948), 152-57.

between the logical order in the brief and the psychological order in the final outline for presentation.<sup>4</sup>

The third quarter is concerned exclusively with mass communication. To this subject the student is introduced through preliminary attention to the nature of news and of public opinion and of their interrelationship in modern society. He then studies the channels by which news comes to the public, with particular reference to physical, economic, and structural characteristics of the mass mediums of communication. Next follows attention to the various forces which operate directly or indirectly to modify news as it appears to the public in report or commentary. Although admittedly time is inadequate for any detailed study of these forces, the student at least acquires some awareness of the nature of private, semi-public, and governmental pressures upon the mass agencies.

Throughout the entire year the student practices giving and receiving both written and spoken communication, with constant attention to selecting and organizing material and to adapting it to specific hearers or readers. Writing assignments total roughly 20,000 words for the three quarters, an amount equivalent to that required in the parallel Freshman English course. In each quarter a term paper is required. The first is an exposition of the data and findings of an original investigation into some aspect or problem of language use. The second is argumentative or persuasive and carries the usual machinery of a research paper, that is, footnotes and annotated bibliography, with a preliminary brief. The third, in most classes, is a presentation of the student's share in the group research carried on by the panel of which he is a member.

In addition to the writing the student has at least three speech exercises each quarter. These vary. He makes several extemporaneous talks before the class. The first of these is recorded, to be played back before the class for analysis and comment. He also either leads or participates in two or more panel discussions during the second and third quarters, perhaps planned jointly with students from another section. And he may engage in debate, interviewing, or other speech activity.

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<sup>4</sup>Here, and elsewhere, read "He learns" as "It is hoped, or intended, that he learn," etc. The writer is aware of the discrepancy between a faculty description of what a course is and does, and the student's description of what that same course is and does for him. But see in this article the section on Testing and Evaluation.

The practical work of the course includes a number of specific projects, some of which may be indicated briefly here. In the first quarter, for example, each student has his own independent word association exercise. The procedures of this have been modified each year so as to remove the "bugs" and make it more efficient in helping him to comprehend some of the semantic confusions and dislocations that tend to thwart communication. In the second quarter he makes use of transcriptions of political speeches and other propaganda talks, accompanied by mimeographed copies, in order to analyze rhetorical and logical content and to contrast oral and written devices used in persuading. He hears a recorded debate of errors with accompanying logical analysis and re-presentation with the fallacies omitted.<sup>5</sup> Akin to these exercises is the minute semantic and logical analysis of a selection from written propaganda. Used this year is a letter from Gerald L. K. Smith to members of his Christian Nationalist organization. Another project is the study of a book which is a sustained argument. For three years this book has been David Lilienthal's *TVA*.

Also in this second quarter the student begins his regular listening to two selected radio programs, one that of a news commentator or analyst, and the other one such as the Chicago Round Table, America United, Capitol Cloakroom, or Meet the Press, in order to lay the foundation for a major critical project of the third quarter, that of determining the relative objectivity and selectivity of radio comment upon public affairs. Each class itself will hear during one period freshly recorded news programs of such contrasting commentators as Heatter and Murrow, in order to study differences in content, emphasis, and manner.

Related to this third-quarter project is a similar one for the press. Each class has available copies of about twenty-five publications, ranging from metropolitan dailies of varying shades from the complexion of the *Chicago Tribune* to that of the New York *Herald-Tribune*, papers put out by large special interest groups such as the AFL and the NAM, papers representing the racial and the religious press, and a country weekly or two. The student makes an intensive study of one

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<sup>5</sup>The transcription of this debate is used by courtesy of the department of speech and the varsity debate squad.

publication or of two contrasting publications in order to determine factors affecting editorial policy, content, and style, that is, such factors as ownership, advertising, location, circulation, and readers.

The third quarter includes also a panel discussion which is the climax of a group research project in some area of mass communication. Each panel group contains four or five students, one of whom is the chairman. The group breaks the topic into manageable segments so that each student has his individual share eventuating in a term paper, but he nevertheless must so familiarize himself with the field of study that he can participate effectively in the oral discussion.

In keeping with the intent to encourage each student to become ultimately an active critical participant in mass communication in his community, some students have on their own initiative written constructive letters to editors regarding newspaper practice and several such letters have been printed.

Of primary value in the practice in communication are the regular conferences, through which much of the real teaching in the course is accomplished. Each student has three conferences a quarter with his instructor. One of these three should be devoted to the student's speaking, either with reference to the transcription of his first speech or to the use of the voice reflector. The others are concerned chiefly with the student's writing. Since the course assumes that the student, being a high school graduate, must bear the responsibility for reasonable care in the mechanics of composition, the instructor uses the conference rather than class time to direct the student to reference and exercise material of value in removing such mechanical inadequacies as persist. Some instructors find the group conference very effective for this purpose.

#### EQUIPMENT AND AIDS

In addition to the customary textbooks and dictionary and to the considerable mimeographed material, the course requires the use of an extra book (*TVA*) during the second quarter and of another (*Your Newspaper*, by the nine Nieman Fellows) during the third, along with the periodical publications already mentioned.

Three types of speech equipment are provided for use of students and instructors: a transcription playback for 78 r.p.m. and 33 1-3 r.p.m. recordings, a voice reflector, and a wire re-

corder. Gradually, it is expected, there will be built up a small collection of wire and disk recordings of particular value to the course, such as radio documentaries, political talks, significant programs of commentators, and university convocation addresses. Through the university's Audio-Visual Education Service are available the recording facilities by means of which student speeches are transcribed and also the motion picture facilities for showing the documentary films used in the third quarter.

### REMEDIAL WORK

Preliminary selective screening by the university forces poorly prepared entering freshmen to take Preparatory English in the extension division before attaining eligibility for either Freshman English or Communication. Audiometric and speech tests at the time of registration also direct some students to corrective work in the speech clinic. It has not, therefore, been found necessary to set up a purely remedial program within the Communication course.

Yet the experience of the first year, when instructors with a minimum of formal speech training admitted some inadequacy in dealing with certain problems, led to designating a specially trained instructor as a speech consultant. The present consultant is released from teaching one section in order to meet those students who are referred to him by another instructor or who are invited by the consultant himself after he has visited a class to observe student speech in the classroom situation. The demand for the consultant's services is so great that more time will have to be provided. Since it is held desirable for the consultant to be also a regular instructor in the course, probably another instructor with special training will have to be obtained.

For special help in reading a student with some disability is referred to the counseling bureau, which has a person trained in remedial reading. But the university at present lacks a reading clinic with complete staff and equipment. For special help in writing the student relies upon his own instructor, although there is now being discussed the advisability of providing within the staff a writing consultant whose services would parallel those of the speech consultant.

### CLASSES AND ENROLLMENT

To provide more time for speech experience class size in Communication has been held to a maximum of twenty-



two, in contrast with the maximum of twenty-eight allowable in Freshman English.

During the first three years classes met thrice weekly for three hours' credit a quarter. Student demand measured in two surveys led to college approval of a departmental request for enlarging the course. Accordingly, in September 1948 classes began to meet four times a week for four hours' credit a quarter.

The Communication course is still operated as an elective open to all regularly admitted freshmen in the College of Science, Literature, and the Arts. Every such freshman thus has a choice between Communication and the traditional Freshman English, a three-credit course. If the freshman's weighted high school record and entrance tests are high enough, he has the added option of electing English A-B-C, a five-credit course combining literature and composition. During the first experimental year elections filled ten sections of Communication. In the second year there were fifteen sections and in the third year, twenty-five. In the face of a smaller total freshman registration and of the change from a three-hour to a four-hour status the number of sections has increased to twenty-eight during the current year of 1948-49.

#### STAFF

Originally it was intended that the teaching staff should consist wholly of instructors borrowed from the departments of English and speech and the School of Journalism. In practice, however, the School of Journalism has been unable to release any instructors for this purpose, and the department of speech has been budgetarily limited so that none has been provided since the first year of operation.

Administratively the present instructional staff may be divided into three groups, although within the staff itself these divisions are insignificant. Eight of the sixteen staff members are instructors in the department of general studies, having been appointed specifically to teach communication. Four more are instructors on the English budget but were appointed at the instance of the advisory committee on communication in accord with an agreement with the dean that a certain number of budgetary items in English be designated for Communication. The remaining four are members of the English department who have been assigned to Communication

at their own request. Of these sixteen, six also teach courses other than Communication, four in humanities and two in English.

With the present increase from a three-hour to a four-hour program, an increase unanimously supported by the staff itself, the full-time teaching load in Communication has correspondingly increased from nine to twelve class-hours a week. Those instructors who teach courses in the humanities or in English have a varying load depending upon their other work there.

In building up the staff the director and the advisory committee have sought diversity of training and experience over and beyond the expected minimum requirements in English and speech. Two instructors — one is an assistant professor — have the Ph.D. degree. All the others have the master's degree and are active candidates for the Ph.D. The M.A. was secured in the following institutions: Minnesota (4, including the two Ph.D.'s), Chicago (2), Columbia (2), including one from Teachers College), Northwestern (2), Claremont, Harvard, Illinois, Iowa, Johns Hopkins, and Kansas State Teachers College at Pittsburg. Six of these Ph.D. candidates are working for the degree in English, five in American studies, and one each in speech, philosophy, and social sciences (specifically in the mass mediums of communication).

Only one staff member came to the course without some previous teaching in secondary school or college or both. Eight instructors saw military service during the war. Others have had experience in professional theater direction, journalism, office work, and industry.

Since nearly all staff members consider the teaching of communication a permanent part of their future and since the course, though past the technically experimental period, must remain experimental insofar as it remains modifiable to meet changing conditions, the staff holds regular meetings both for consideration of general matters in the field as well as for discussion of problems of the course itself. During 1947-48, when thirteen staff members were new, two-hour staff sessions occurred each week to provide a kind of inservice training. Considerable attention was then given to communication courses elsewhere, especially those at Drake, Iowa, Michigan State, Denver, and the University of Southern California, and Stephens and Macalester colleges.

Sometimes nonmembers are asked to speak, such as the director of the speech clinic, the head of the counseling bureau, a professor of educational psychology, a professor of speech concerned with the use of contemporary radio speeches in the teaching of critical listening skill, the director of the communication skills course in the College of Agriculture, and the director of the communication course at Macalester. Staff members present panel discussions on topics relating to their teaching. Individual teachers give reports of books and current articles pertinent to the course work, such as appear in *College English* and the *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. Committee reports lead to discussion of policy in content and in examination procedure. And there are even discussions of lighter moment, as when the social committee broaches plans for one of the several parties which the highly congenial staff enjoys during the year.

#### ADMINISTRATION

As a general education course cutting across traditional departmental boundaries Communication is administered within the department of general studies, along with courses in the humanities, in family relations, and in the social and natural sciences. The director of the program, who is released from one-third of his teaching load in English linguistics because of his administrative duties, was so appointed by the dean upon the recommendation of the original planning committee. He is directly responsible to the chairman of the department of general studies, who coincidentally is also assistant dean for the junior college. At the same time he is aided by a supervisory committee, also appointed by the dean, which meets several times a year to discuss matters of general policy and to recommend persons to fill staff vacancies. The committee chairman ex officio is the director of the communication program; the three other members are the chairman of Freshman English and professors of speech and journalism. The composition of the committee makes its members valuable for consultation in areas of their own specialization.

Inner administration of the course involves the work of several staff members. One is released from one-third of his teaching load in order to serve as assistant director. Three others are chairmen of committees each of which is responsible for the syllabus and examinations used in a specific quarter of the course. The director, assistant director, speech consultant,

and committee chairmen form a steering committee which helps to integrate the work in the three quarters, plans staff meetings, and acts as a clearinghouse for various problems.

During its first year the course offered no budgetary problem, since all instructors were on loan from the old-line departments of English and speech. Although some of the instructional staff are still on loan from English, the rest are now paid from the budget of the department of general studies, in which a limited number of items has been thus specifically allocated. A fee of one dollar for the entire course is now charged in order to provide a fund to pay for permanent electrical equipment, voice transcriptions and recordings, and the showing of films.

### TESTING AND EVALUATION

So far all testing within the course has been in the hands of regular members of the staff. At first special committees were named to prepare the final examinations, but now a different policy has been found more satisfactory, that of having the committee on the quarter's work responsible for the examination as well as for the content and syllabus. All students in the same quarter, for example Communication 2, take the same examination at the same time. The finals are written only; evaluation of the spoken work of the student is by the instructor on the basis of what is done in class.

No elaborate battery of tests, such as has been developed in some communication skills courses elsewhere, has been constructed for the Minnesota program. But there is admittedly a need for at least such a series of relatively objective tests as will demonstrate achievement in various testable areas, from punctuation to critical thinking, and probably including speech. To meet that need is a desideratum in planning for the immediate future.

At the same time some information already has been obtained to indicate how the students themselves feel about the course and about the effectiveness with which it enables them to solve their problems in communication. At the end of the first experimental quarter, in December 1945, students in the course were given a questionnaire to determine specific attitudes toward content, teaching practices, and the like. Results confirmed the general policy of the course administration and also initiated the thinking which led to later expansion to four-hour status. In June 1948 an enlarged and modified question-

naire was given to students in Communication, Freshman Composition, and the five-hour English A-B-C combination of composition and literature. It comprised sixty-five questions to be answered in a graded scale of one to five to indicate the relative strength of an affirmative or a negative response or a neutral response. The questionnaire was prepared by a committee representing the Communication and the Freshman English staffs and was given to the students as a project co-operatively sponsored by the university's Bureau of Educational Research.

Some of the questions were admittedly loaded; that is, they were included for students in Communication or for those in Freshman English but not for both groups. It is also true that the responses were subjective in that they measured the student's opinion about his achievement and not his achievement itself in terms of measurable data. Yet the results of the survey have some significance.

Many students, expecting the course to contain a review of mechanics, expressed the feeling that they had not improved their writing in this respect. Others were disappointed in not having vocabulary drill and class dictionary exercises. But noteworthy is the fact that all questions bearing upon the exclusive or heavily emphasized content of Communication were answered so encouragingly as to justify the conclusion that already most students are finding it good training toward the goal of effective communication in citizenship. In fact, 77 percent specifically said so.

Without offering detailed responses here, it may be apposite to break this generalization down into some of the specific questions which students answered about the course's effectiveness. Of the students filling out the questionnaire at the class hour when it was administered, the following percentages responded affirmatively to these questions:

Has the course:	Yes %
Developed in you the idea that "good English" depends on changing practices of speakers and writers?.....	53
Improved your ability to organize material for presentation to others?	81
Aided you in developing ideas effectively in written papers?.....	83
Increased your awareness of the relationship between a word and the idea or concept for which it stands? .....	85
Strengthened your feeling of ease in speaking before a group?.....	77

Made you feel more at ease in talking informally as a member of a group? .....	73
Increased your effectiveness in leading a group discussion?.....	39
Helped you to organize and to test your reasoning in preparing an argument for presentation?.....	82
Developed your ability to determine the soundness of reasoning in an argument? .....	87
Increased your ability to analyze written and spoken matter designed to persuade? ....	95
Increased your ability to understand talks, lectures, or sermons heard outside of university courses?.....	76
Helped you to evaluate a newspaper as a source of information?....	95
Developed your standards of judgment to be applied to documentary films? .....	78
Developed your standards of judgment to be applied to entertainment films? .....	69
Helped you to develop better standards of judgment in listening to news analysis and comment on the radio?.....	96

In June 1949 this survey will be repeated with the present freshman class. In the meantime the staff is endeavoring to strengthen the class work where the survey indicated that it was weak. Furthermore, some reorganization of the course has occurred. When these two factors are placed alongside the fact that class-hour time this year is increased 33 1-3 percent and student-instructor conference time 50 percent, to say nothing of the circumstance that the staff as a whole is an experienced staff now, it may not be unreasonable to expect that a still better all-round showing will appear from the projected resurvey of student opinions and attitudes.

#### TRAINING OF TEACHERS OF COMMUNICATION

Besides the primary function of the Minnesota program, that of preparing students, there exists the secondary function of preparing new staff members as teachers of communication. In common with most universities Minnesota discourages faculty "inbreeding," although special circumstances may warrant retention of a Minnesota Ph.D. as a faculty member. To some extent this is true of the communication program, where there must always be a core or nucleus of permanent staff members with special training in the field. Yet most communication staff members ultimately will be teaching in other institutions. Their preparation as instructors, therefore, should not be limited to work in the Minnesota program.

At present the only direct preparation is that provided by the staff sessions, which offer a limited inservice training, and by the director's class-visiting and consulting with instructors. But several teachers deliberately include in their graduate work specific courses in journalism, political science, philosophy, English language, and speech in order to further their personal preparation. And it already appears that the university's American studies program, with its interdepartmental degree, includes nearly all courses which would desirably be listed in a graduate curriculum for prospective communication teachers. Two or three additional courses, such as one in linguistics, may be taken as electives outside that program. One new course, that in the teaching of communication in college, might well be added to the curriculum. Thus it should be possible for interested graduate students to obtain at the University of Minnesota classroom experience and staff inservice training on the one hand and, on the other, a Ph.D. in American studies with special recommendation for communication teaching. Such a Ph.D. program, of course, does not preclude study toward a degree in old-line departments by staff members who prefer specialization in history or speech or English.

#### LIAISON WITH SECONDARY SCHOOLS

In the thinking of the original committee in 1944-45 was the suggestion that those responsible for the proposed course should establish working relationships with secondary schools. Accordingly two dozen persons, one-third from each of the Twin Cities school systems and the other third from the university, met in a two-day conference at a resort hotel in June 1946. From this conference emerged the permanent Twin Cities Committee on Communication, a group which meets six or seven times a year. Each school system is represented by administrators, high school teachers, and elementary teachers, and the university by the director of the communication program, who serves now as chairman of the committee, and by faculty members from communication, English, speech, journalism, and the rhetoric division in the College of Agriculture.

The Twin Cities Committee has embarked upon a long-time project, engaged in cooperatively by its four principal committees in each of the areas of communication, to discover without reference to grade or age levels the sequential steps in each of the many aspects of communication skills. Such an

outline, leading to or aided by various doctoral research, should ultimately provide information of extraordinary value in curriculum-building in communication.

At the same time this committee performs other functions. It aids in intercity and school and university understanding. It contributes to various special programs in the general field of communication. Currently — from January through March in 1949 — it is engaged in promoting a series of lectures and discussions for all language arts teachers in Minneapolis and St. Paul with the purpose of elucidating the social significance of educational stress upon the mass mediums of communication. One of these meetings will be held jointly with the Spring Conference of English Teachers and Librarians, with Edgar Dale of Ohio State University as the guest speaker and with an audience drawn from throughout the state.

Indeed, several circumstances make it not unreasonable to anticipate that, at least in the Twin Cities area, the teaching of communication with emphasis upon the mass mediums will eventually be initiated in the junior high school if not earlier. If that occurs, then sooner or later some entering university students will be nearly as well prepared as present freshmen are at the end of the course. At that time the university will be able to provide for such students so much more intensive and comprehensive a program that it may well be desirable to set up for them a series of advanced sections to parallel the regular beginning sections.

### CONCLUSION

The communication program at the University of Minnesota places its emphasis upon the linguistic process itself and upon the mass mediums of communication in its effort to develop the student's general ability to communicate effectively as an adult citizen in a democratic society. The program has now emerged from the experimental period into a revised stage where results justify retention of the course in the university curriculum. By-products of the program are the training of college teachers of communication and the establishment of stimulating and constructive relationships with communication-minded leaders in the Twin Cities school system.



## Basic Communication at Michigan State College

THE COURSE in Basic Communication at Michigan State College was instituted at the time of the inception of the Basic College in September 1944. The course was entitled Written and Spoken English then and it bears the same title today, but there is little resemblance between what was taught four years ago and what is being taught now. In 1944 we had a full-time staff of seven members who taught a course they had not themselves outlined; in 1949 we have a staff of 65 members who are teaching a course which has evolved as the result of their studies and experience, and as the result of the experience of other teachers of similar courses elsewhere. The course in 1952 will probably be much closer to the present course—not, it is to be hoped, because of fossilization, but because we now know where we are going and why. The staff, however, lays no flattering unction to its collective soul in an affirmation of eternal rightness. Much remains to be done, much is being done now, and it is the purpose of this paper to discuss frankly the nature of the present course, its philosophy, its organization, and its teaching staff, including the strengths and weaknesses of each.

It is necessary to consider the role of Written and Spoken English in relation to the Basic College and to the institution as a whole before turning attention to the course itself. The Basic College unit<sup>1</sup> at Michigan State is composed of seven departments administered by a dean who is coordinate in rank with the deans of all the upper schools in which the students complete their degree programs. Each of the seven departments is responsible for teaching a broad comprehensive course

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<sup>1</sup>The material on the Basic College is based on an article by Howard C. Rather, "General Education at a State College with Technologic Traditions," *Higher Education*, III (May 15, 1947), p. 1.

which cuts across usual departmental lines, a course which is intended to be a self-sufficient unit, not an introductory course, meaningful only if further work in the field is taken by the students. The basic courses are planned to provide the student with a general foundation, a common core of educational experience, and to give him an opportunity to choose a field of special interest after exploration of a number of fields and in the light of far more knowledge about his own interests and abilities than he gained under any former system. (Freshmen may begin the study of a special field immediately, however, for they do not spend more than half their first two years taking basic courses.) The Basic College provides the student with a greatly increased counseling program, more adequately meets the needs of students not completing degree programs, and through its comprehensive examination program allows the more experienced and competent student to move ahead more rapidly than his less experienced fellows. All freshmen and sophomores are enrolled in the Basic College, and all during freshman and sophomore years take Written and Spoken English, and four of the other basic courses, including either Biological or Physical Science, either Social Science or Effective Living, and either History or Civilization or Literature and Fine Arts. The fact that only five out of seven courses are taken admittedly represents a compromise with the needs of students whose special training, say in engineering or music, requires immediate and extensive preparation. In most cases the student who is specializing from the start will, however, take departmental courses which compensate for the deficiency.

The course in Written and Spoken English has been developed with a constant awareness of the nature of the institution, of the Basic College, and of the students therein enrolled. "Michigan State College is a service institution with a strong technical tradition. It has long given emphasis to functional learnings. Through its extension service in agriculture and home economics and by means of other adult educational programs, it has been close to the interests of the people. Its oldest tradition and foremost objective has been to do all in its power to understand the needs of the people and to serve them with a useful education program."<sup>2</sup> The average student at

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<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

Michigan State is a high school graduate, a boy or girl who has done some work on farm, or in shop or office, who plans to enter a technical field, and who has had a limited background in language or speech training. Our students vary tremendously, however, in training, experience, and ability, though now that the flood tide of veteran enrollment has ebbed away, the variety is less obvious. It must be noted further that of all who enroll in the college as freshmen only 35 to 40 percent complete a program of four-year training.

The course in Written and Spoken English has been planned with these facts in mind. It is obvious that this must be a terminal course — that is to say, it must offer training in writing, reading, speaking, and listening that will, insofar as possible, be definitive for the majority of the students. Most of them will take no further work in these skills. It is equally obvious that this course must be utilitarian — that is to say, it must consider language in its function as a transmitter of fact, and as an incentive to action. Our students in and out of the classroom will be most concerned with giving and receiving specific information, and most subjected to argument (propaganda) while arguing themselves. They will not, and this is unhappily true but none the less real, be much concerned with language as an imaginative, interpretative experience nor as an aesthetic one. (The course in literature and fine arts is designed to introduce them to imaginative writing, and that is one reason why it is excluded from this course.) By its nature, then, the course must exclude instruction in or appreciation of imaginative writing (I do not say creative, since all writing is by its nature creative), aesthetics, *bel canto*, phonetics, oral interpretation, and so on. The student's greatest need, from the point of view of this course, is to express himself without ambiguity in a socially acceptable manner, at what Mr. Pooley has called "the homely level." Since the students have for the most part been very inadequately trained in any form of communication, they are unaware, and perhaps should be, of a consistent linguistic lexicon. The terminology of formal grammar is unknown to them. What is desirable, then, is not that they should be subjected to a training that can mean nothing to them, but that they should be trained to use their own experience in developing the skills of communication. It is rank traditional foolishness to assume that students cannot read or speak or write. They often can read at a very specialized level

(comics in dialect, sports columns) and they can talk to each other in a highly developed jargon that is not learned without practice. It becomes our obligation to begin with what they know, to develop skills only partially learned and not to impose upon them an entirely new code that they will immediately discard once outside the classroom door. At the same time we have an obligation to make them aware of what language habits and what skills are socially acceptable in the world in which they will work and play. The student who says, as some have, "It don't matter none to me," has made his point, but he is ill-prepared to hold down a job worthy of a college graduate. Finally it is clear that the course in Written and Spoken English must be a skills course, not a course in a subject matter. While content must remain important, it is the skill that counts.

### OBJECTIVES

The course is based upon a general definition of good communication; the word "good" is both weak and ambiguous, so perhaps "adequate" might be considered a more suitable word.

Good communication is that which is clear, socially acceptable, effective, and socially responsible. Communication is clear when it results from an awareness, conscious or unconscious, of the signs of structural meaning (grammatical form and structure); it is clear when it is unambiguous, structurally and lexically, and when it is organized in terms of purpose and intention. Communication is socially acceptable when it is free from readily determined illiteracies, and when it is characterized by observation of current and linguistically valid conventions. Communication is socially acceptable when it is acceptable to the community in which the user lives and works. Communication is effective when it is forthright, simple, specific and adaptable to the audience, in intention, tone, meaning, and construction. Communication is socially responsible when it is grounded in observable fact, in honestly contrived opinion, in an awareness of personal and social bias, when it contributes to understanding and harmony among the greatest number in a democratic society.<sup>3</sup>

This definition has been accepted as the base rock upon which the philosophy of the department rests, however shakily, and from it the objectives are derived. It is generally true that course objectives are as often restated as they are seldom realized. At best they are theoretical, often vaguely so, but they serve nonetheless as a constant guide and check for teaching techniques and double as a goal to aim at.

<sup>3</sup>My definition.

The present syllabus for the Written and Spoken English course lists twelve objectives to be realized by the students through instruction and testing. They have recently been revised by committee to include nine,<sup>4</sup> with a number of what are called "subobjectives," as unfortunate a word as one would care to come across.

1. *Good communication demands a knowledge of how people think.* Good communication therefore demands a knowledge of the psychological drives which people strive to satisfy, a knowledge of the limits of attention, of the variety of reactions to a stimulus, of the confusion resulting from bias and prejudice, and of the processes of rationalization. Further, some knowledge of the individual responses to repetition, suggestion, emotion, stereotypes, social pressure, and rhythmical patterns is essential. The obvious danger here lies in stressing psychology rather than communication, so that the course merely becomes a study of motor responses, not a study of language in action.

2. *Good communication is adapted to an audience situation.* This means that some consideration must be given to the previous experience of the audience including their economic and social background, their interests, and the occasion which is responsible for the group being together.

3. *Good communication has a definite, if not a defined, purpose.* The primary purpose of the communication experienced by our students is to inform, or to persuade.

4. *Good communication must have a central idea or governing theme.* The one thing a student does not seem able to do is to limit his subject, stick to it, and enlarge upon it. He wants to talk about many things, most of them vague or abstract, in the manner of bad Sunday supplement morality essays. It is necessary to teach him to analyze a broad area, to define and to limit a specific topic, and to analyze that topic in terms of a controlling idea.

5. *Good communication demands the selection of pertinent, adequate, and effective materials.* This objective is largely inherent in objective number four, but it is stated separately in order that the nature of the materials may be discussed. The

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<sup>4</sup>The departmental objectives were reformulated during the summer of 1948 by a committee under the chairmanship of Russell Jenkins.

student should be encouraged to draw upon his own experience (that is, what has happened to him in the past, what he is at present studying, what he hears in lectures or on the radio, what he reads in books, magazines, newspapers, what he sees on the screen), though he is also asked to do a "research paper" based on effective use of the library and a knowledge of standard reference texts. Emphasis under this objective is placed upon the evaluation of sources, the material derived from them, and upon the determination of the relevant and the irrelevant, the important and the unimportant. The taking of accurate notes, a great skill in itself, is a subobjective here.

6. *Good communication has a definite pattern of organization.* The types of order (logical, chronological, spatial, and so forth) and the pattern of that order (the outline) are subordinate to this objective.

7. *Good communication uses those methods of development which most effectively accomplish the purpose and develop the central idea.* Subordinate to this objective is the knowledge of types of development and the kinds of reasoning.

8. *Good communication demands a knowledge of the nature of language and of its history.* It is believed that the student should know something of the symbolic nature of language, should know that language is dynamic not static, and should know that there are levels of usage with regard to pronunciation, vocabulary, word form, and sentence structure.

9. *Good communication must meet certain social standards of effectiveness and acceptability.* This objective implies training in functional grammar, appropriate punctuation, accepted manuscript mechanics, and spelling, and knowledge of such oral techniques as a sense of communication, effective volume variation, effective pitch variation, and effective body control.

These are the objectives of the course, and its organization and content are based upon them. They apply equally to communication from the point of view of the listener, the speaker, the reader, and the writer.

## ORGANIZATION

Students are enrolled in Written and Spoken English normally for three terms of approximately eleven weeks, five hours a week, for three credit hours a term. Sections average twenty-five or less. The hours are divided into two single-

hour periods of recitation, one two-hour period of writing laboratory, and one hour of lecture. The lectures are delivered to large groups of students in suitable auditoriums. The hours of recitation are devoted to discussion, to problems in reading, and to speeches. The writing laboratory is devoted to problems in writing, and to the actual writing of papers with the help and supervision of the instructor. Dictionaries and standard manuals are part of the laboratory equipment, and the laboratories are held in rooms designed for writing. All writing is done in the laboratory, except in those cases where the student is unable to finish. The students are expected to plan carefully for a written assignment by thinking through the particular problem. When they arrive at the laboratory they write the paper straight through without regard for grammatical or technical excellence. Then after a conference with the instructor they rewrite in order to refine or to polish. Papers are often outlined in advance and this outline is submitted to the instructor and returned to the student for a guide. Students write five or more papers, and give five or more speeches a term. They are given an hour midterm test, and a two-hour final each term, except the third, when they take the comprehensive examination.

The comprehensive examination is a special examination designed and administered by a board of examiners who spend most of their time on this project. One member of the examining board usually teaches at least one section each term, and the department has its own comprehensive committee to assist the examining board and to help determine the content of the examination. The examination consists of three parts: a paper written in a two-hour period; a speech; an objective two-hour examination testing skills and application of knowledge, not course content. Papers are read by two members of the department, and, if there is significant disagreement, by a third. Speeches are heard by three members of the department and the two closest grades are averaged. The objective test is machine scored. Qualified students are permitted to take the comprehensive examination at the end of the first or second term, provided their grades have been high, that they are recommended on the basis of their background and personality by their instructors, and that they pass the scrutiny of a committee on special permission. This committee surveys the scores made upon reading and psychology entrance tests. Since

there are not advanced or backward sections in the course, all students being thrown together, this system provides for the advancement of the more qualified.

The department does make special arrangements for students who have particular difficulty in reading, writing, or speaking. There is a clinic in each of these fields administered by an expert; attendance at the clinic is voluntary and students spend only the amount of time necessary to solve their problems, which the majority succeed in doing successfully. Experimentation with such devices as a wire recorder, a metronome, a Wilcox-Gay Recordio, a Whipple tuning fork set, the Seashore musical discrimination tests, mirrors, the Harvard reading films, and a Tachistoscope are a part of the clinic program, and significant results are carried over into the regular course program.

The course is not designed to take up each of the objectives consecutively, the theory being that at the end of three terms' work all will have been covered and understood. Constant attention is paid to assure that any given problem will be related to several of the objectives simultaneously if possible, since obviously they represent abstractions of a totality.

At present students have five texts: a dictionary; a collection of miscellaneous essays used as a reader; a handbook of grammar and mechanics; a speech text; and a syllabus, which contains the statement of course objectives, material on reading, listening, notetaking, library work, course organization and rules, vocabulary, sample themes, and assignments.

The work of each term is divided into units, each one of which contains a statement of objectives, a discussion of the nature of the unit, and a series of assignments which are labelled variously, *Observe, Read, Discuss, Write, Speak and Listen, Listen, Spell, Build Vocabulary, and Outline*. Insofar as possible, but not far enough, the students are expected to observe, read, discuss, write, and speak upon the same subject. Vocabulary study is based upon words in selections read, but the spelling list is an arbitrary one based on lists of words most frequently misspelled.

The lecture program, one hour a week, is the Listening Laboratory. The lectures are delivered to larger groups and are designed to train and test the students' ability to listen with discrimination and to take organized notes on orally delivered



material. Each week the student submits his outline, together with a summary and personal evaluation of the lecture heard the previous week. His instructor checks the outline to determine whether or not he is learning to discriminate between the important and the unimportant, between principle and illustration, between valid and invalid reasoning.

### CONTENT

In the first unit the student studies his environment, the college scene, the total impact of which is new to him. He speaks and writes on some aspect of college life which he has found impressive and he reads several articles related to college and education. In the second unit he studies the development of ideas from the sentence to the paragraph, is taught the rudiments of organization and outlining, and reads a number of short paragraphs and articles with emphasis upon the central idea and its development. He writes a paper and gives a talk developing a single, simple idea, and he is introduced to the concept of differences and similarities between the writing and speaking processes. In the third unit he is introduced to larger organization, that of paragraphs into a larger framework, and speaks and writes a more complex talk and paper on some aspect of his experience with language. In the fourth unit he is introduced to the concept of definition, both of actual entities and of abstract concepts. At this time he is introduced to the nature of the thought processes, to rationalization, and to bias. In the final unit of the first term he studies the explanation of processes and the giving of directions. The series of lectures given the first term is devoted to the nature, the history and the development of language, and the concept of levels of usage.

This brief description of the term's work cannot possibly do justice to all the material. In the writing laboratory, for instance, the student not only writes his papers but also studies the simple facts of sentence construction. Though there is no study of formal grammar as such, he is made aware of concepts of agreement and disagreement, subordination and coordination, modification, conventions of punctuation and similar aspects of what is referred to as "functional" grammar.

The second term is devoted primarily to the short and long reports, the long report being known by its conventional but misleading traditional title, "The Research Paper." The first

unit is devoted to the study of slanted and objective reporting, and to the discrimination between fact, inference, judgment, and opinion. The student gives a short talk reporting upon a condition, place, or event. He then writes three reports upon the same condition, place, or event, slanting two of the reports from opposite points of view and making, or trying to make, the third one objective. His reading is confined to factual reports and printed research articles. The second unit is devoted to the long written report, based upon investigation in the library, where he is expected to prepare a bibliography of his subject and to read a limited number of books, periodical articles, and, if possible, newspaper articles. During this unit considerable study is given to standard reference works and library aids, and the formal methods of using footnotes, preparing note and bibliography cards, and to other mechanics of technical writing. The choice of topic depends upon the student's particular interest, but he is encouraged to select a field that he is already studying, or a topic that would be suitable for a paper in another basic course. The other departments of the Basic College have submitted long lists of topics valuable to students enrolled in their courses, and every attempt is made to give the student an opportunity to relate this work to his other course activities. When he has prepared the paper and submitted it, he then gives a five-minute talk with notes summarizing and appraising his work, or some aspect of it. The revision of his notes in preparation for this talk is of great assistance in developing his awareness of the differences between oral and written expression. The lectures of the second term have as their subject matter the use of the library, analyses of the relative values of newspapers, books, magazines, public speaking, radio, and motion pictures as mediums of communication.

The first two terms have as their objective the effective communication of fact; communication is studied as a transmitter of information. In the third term, language is studied as an incentive to action, as a weapon of persuasion, as a means of influencing behavior. The most obvious form of persuasion in our contemporary society is the advertisement. It is as inescapable as a heavy shower in an open field, and it is a rare student who cannot sing at least a dozen irritating commercial ditties, and identify the major industrial products by their slogans. We ask our students to analyze a current advertisement in both a talk and a paper, not from the point of view of

its success in selling the product, but from the nature of its persuasive means and the ethic which underlies it. We also require a sales talk, preferably of a product which the student feels valuable and which he can demonstrate in the classroom. The sales talk is assigned simply as an introduction to persuasive methods, not as an exercise in salesmanship, and it is followed by a full-fledged persuasive talk in which the student is asked to persuade the class to some point of view which will result in healthful action. The second unit of the term is devoted to panel discussion of some current, controversial topic. Students investigate the problem, elect a chairman, and hold a reasonably lengthy discussion before the class, in groups of five. They write papers on aspects of the problem discussed. At the end of the term there is some brief training in letter writing, an apparent irrelevancy. But the letters are persuasive in nature, one being an application for an actual job the student wishes to have, the other urging some qualified individual to speak at a meeting of a group to which the student belongs. Students are never asked to write or speak for imaginary audiences, since communication in such cases would be separated from reality.

The entire focus of the third term, except for the brief introduction to correspondence, is upon the responsible use of language in a democratic society. Emphasis is placed upon the obligations attendant upon freedom of speech, and upon the valid use of communication to bring about changes in an imperfect society. Too many writers and speakers of great skill have no social responsibility whatsoever; the skill required for effective communication is obviously not enough in itself. The lectures take up such problems as how we think, human responses to words, psychological barriers to effective communication, types of evidence, public opinion and propaganda, public relations, and language barriers to international understanding.

Such in sketchy outline is the course in Written and Spoken English. Like train schedules it is subject to change, but unlike them, not without notice.

#### STAFF

The greatest problem of the traditional freshman English course has always been the staff that teaches it. Bromidally speaking, no plan is any better than the men who follow it. Freshman English is the stepchild of many a department,

taught by young instructors who pine for courses of their own, and chafe at the bridle of theme grading. And so the course which in many ways should be an introduction to language and hence to thought is handed about to all comers; including, when the enrollment is high, faculty wives who have not stepped before into a classroom and whose A.B. is but a dim memory.

The communication skills course at Michigan State is not the traditional freshman course, though it retains much that was of value in that polymorphous curriculum. But some of the staff problems remain. The department has been a stopping-off place for aspiring actors and speakers, a way station for Shakespeare scholars, and a fieldhouse for aspiring psychologists. It is not easy to obtain teachers who are willing to teach one course for years at a time. But the organization of the Basic College has admirably done much to offset the problem.

In the first place, the department of written and spoken English is a separate administrative unit with a full-time department head. It is not a part of either the speech or English departments. This departmental separation makes possible the encouragement of good teaching, the incentive to study the problem of communication as a large problem worthy of much independent work and research, and the possibility of rewarding effective work with rank and salary. We look for, and have found, teachers whose principal interest is communication, who are willing to spend their full time at it, and who know that salary raises and promotions depend upon that interest. With a large nucleus of such teachers, a continuity and an intensive development are possible that would not be, were the staff continually moving on every two or three years. We do not subscribe to the doctrine of "three years and out," and our turnover is decreasing.

Moreover, the policy of the Basic College permits an instructor to hold a position with the English or speech departments if he wishes and to teach only parttime with us. About ten percent are on dual appointment.

In order for a department such as ours to have teachers who are willing and anxious to stay, what is needed in the field of general education is a training program in graduate schools which permits an aspiring teacher to study in two or

more fields, cutting across departmental lines. Ideally our teachers should have had much work in linguistics, in writing and literature, and speech. The usual graduate program forbids this, and the result, of course, is that the teacher yearns to emphasize his specialty—yearns to and does. Until a graduate program offering training in the several fields that contribute to communication, and training in communication itself, the staff problem will remain. Michigan State meanwhile has found a pretty fair solution.

### WEAKNESSES

Much has been said about what's right with the course. What's wrong with it?

The present greatest weakness is that the course as taught is not entirely commensurate with the departmental philosophy nor with the stated objectives. The staff is partly responsible for this weakness, but the present selection of texts is more responsible. It is difficult to get a large staff to accept a common philosophy, no matter how explicitly it may be written down. The average instructor at the college level has not, as suggested above, studied language as communication, is not always familiar with the concept of functional grammar, is unwilling to accept general American as a desirable dialect, is not sure of the close relationship between speech and writing, and wants to teach them as totally distinct. The departmental program is doing much to bring about a unified, though not stereotyped, approach. Through a series of in-service training programs and staff meetings, all the instructors have an opportunity to listen to experienced teachers, many of them from other schools, and to express their own opinions in free discussion and exchange of information. Most matters of departmental policy and teaching techniques are voted upon by the staff. This democratic organization promotes the welfare of the student, and guarantees an eventual and healthy unity.

The present texts are to be changed next year and replaced with selections which reflect our objectives more clearly. We have selected a reading exercise manual which will be used during the laboratory hours, and which combines study in reading and writing. The reader has been replaced with a book which gives greater emphasis to important writers and to writings which are noteworthy for their simplicity, their clarity, and

their intelligent approach to the problems of thinking, communicating, and living. In addition, the students will subscribe to *Harpers* for three months during the second term, and will receive one copy each of three newspapers representing divergent political views. It will thus be possible to correlate the study of the long report with actual and immediately contemporary periodical and newspaper reporting. Our reading program has unquestionably been inadequate. Not enough time is provided for reading and discussion of reading in class, and no techniques of teaching reading have been evolved adequately. These changes may help.

A second weakness of the course at present is the testing program. This is a skills course, and the objective, machine-scored tests at midterm and at end term do not test skills adequately. Too much testing on the conventions of grammar has distorted the course perspective and belied our own philosophy.

A third weakness derives from the students themselves, and nothing short of a radical overhauling of the whole educational system in this country will remedy it. Many of our students have had an absolute minimum of training in any sort of communication. Some have not written more than two or three papers in four years of high school work. Consequently, the instructor often feels that he has to start way below the college level.

Probably the course should be extended to include a study of more of the mass mediums of communication. The lecture program attempts this but it is not sufficient. The student needs to develop a great critical awareness of the motion picture, the magazine, the newspaper, and the radio. In our emphasis upon developing skill in communication we are forced to neglect these important social forces. We know that skillful communication is not enough; a skilled communicator can be a dangerous man. We are therefore placing increasing emphasis, especially in the third term, upon the responsible use of language. But we could go further and still not be accused of indoctrination.

Dozens of students pass the course who are not skilled in communication. If they didn't we would have the largest department in the world. No student passes the course without an awareness of communication that he never had

before, without some improvement in his ability to write and to speak, and less in his ability to read and to listen. The average student does not claim to know calculus, and entering a calculus course he is waiting if not anxious to be taught. The average student does think he knows how to speak and to write, and to a certain extent he does. But one works against this obvious inertia, by keeping the course as realistic as possible. It has been developed in terms of the student's background and needs. The work is constantly related to his own experience and to his own abilities, as well as to his other work in the Basic College. He is not encouraged to become an orator; he is urged to learn to speak naturally and effectively as he might at a lodge or a union meeting. He is not asked to write in imitation of a great master of Ciceronian prose; he is urged to write simply, forthrightly, and specifically. He is not asked to be pretentious, but to be honest.

The majority of the students like the course. They learn to develop certain attitudes toward language and the communicative process. They realize that what seems so very easy is often the result of careful application, and that though they have always spoken and written, they have seldom done so effectively. Many of them work hard. Most of them change from blushing, shrugging figures with little to say, and that vaguely, into calm pleasant speakers, and many of them learn to write with emphasis and point. What is most important, they all become aware of communication, sensitively and perceptibly.

## The Drake University Program in Communication

AN ADEQUATE treatment of the program in communication for Drake University freshmen requires a discussion of the educational thinking in the university and in the department of English that led to the formulation of the course, a description of the course itself, and a summary of our present thinking as the result of our five years' experience.

### THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Early in 1943, after three years of study, the faculty of the Liberal Arts College voted to adopt a program of general education in the first two years of college work. This program includes three major areas: language and literature; the social sciences (history, economics, political science and sociology); and the natural sciences. There are six one-year courses of eight credit hours, two courses in each grouping. These courses or their equivalents are required of all students.

The educational philosophy of the faculty, agreed upon in democratic discussion, is essentially that of the Reconstructionist school of educational thinking. The philosophy is student-centered, and it holds that the function of education is to begin where the student is and to train him in those values and skills that will enable him to contribute continually to the renewal and improvement of society. Our approach is ecological. Each student is in an environment—social, physical, verbal—and the task of education, in our view, is to equip the student to adapt himself to his environment. Yet the adaptation, we hold, must be qualified by a vision of a better mode of life, and the student must be trained in those attitudes and skills that will stimulate him to strive effectively for a better world.

Upon the decision of the college to establish a program of general education and the adoption of the philosophy which

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was to govern it, the department of English undertook to prepare the general education course in language. The department asked for and received a free hand for three years in this undertaking, with only the provision that the other departments in the university had to be convinced of the soundness of the program before its continuation beyond that time.

With this opportunity the department began its task. The first concern was to re-examine the subject matter with which we were to work and the method of learning most appropriate to that subject matter and to the student. After this inquiry we could formulate the specific goals of the new course that would meet the larger aims of the general education program itself. Freshman English in the American college has long been traditional, but it was felt that true scientific inquiry must question even the most hallowed precedents, and that the existence of a tradition in the department of English was no greater guarantee of infallibility than was, say, the tradition of astrological inquiry in fourteenth century medicine. Tradition itself may perpetuate both truth and error, especially if that tradition goes back to a prescientific period. Such a re-examination obviously required that the investigators divest themselves so far as possible of preconceived notions. First, there was the examination of the subject matter appropriate to a general education program in language. We turned to the linguists for help. We found Sapir's definition of language as a voluntarily produced system of symbols generally accepted. The first key word here seemed to be *symbols*. It was necessary, therefore, to explore (a process still going on) the general subject of symbolism and particularly of language symbolism. The program of reading, always larger than we could cover, had to include, besides Sapir, such works as Oertel, *Lectures in the Study of Language*; Stern, *Meaning and the Change of Meaning*; Paget, *Human Speech*; Pillsbury and Meader, *The Psychology of Language*; Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*; Urban, *Language and Reality*; Allport and Vernon, *Studies in Expressive Movements*; Gray, *Foundations of Language*; MacKaye, *The Logic of Language*; and the writers of the schools both of general semantics and Basic English.

Needless to say, in trying to educate ourselves, we discovered a welter of conflicting points of view and differing emphases. Some kind of resolution of these had to be made if we were to remain dispassionately objective and not ourselves to become

partisans. We therefore set up (A) concurrence on principles among different groups of writers and (B) empirical verification of these principles, so far as possible, as the criteria for validity. The conclusion was inescapable that a large part of our new course must deal with language as symbolism and the problems of symbolic meaning — in short, with semantics.

The second significant word in Sapir's definition is the term system — "system of symbols." We had, therefore, to turn to those scholars who have dealt with the grammatical system of the language. Everywhere we turned we found serious students like Wyld, Fries, and Marckwardt insisting that language should be studied as a science and that grammar must be descriptive of current usage. Such writers as Fries (*American English Grammar*), Guerard "Ten Levels of Language," *The American Scholar*, XVI, (Spring 1947, 148-58), and Thomas (*Introduction to the Phonetics of American English*), as well as the vast body of business correspondence, on the one hand, and drama and fiction in dialect, on the other, led us into a study of the levels or "areas" of American English. It became apparent at once that our proposed course would have to deal objectively with the system of symbolic communication in several different areas of usage, and that we could not assume a prescriptive attitude towards any given group of usages.

Both the description of the grammatical system of English (together with its cognate subject, the "stylistic" system) and the study of symbolism lead to the recognition of the existence in language, as in other sciences, of laws. These laws are descriptive of the systems and of the processes of change within the systems, both semantic and grammatical. We concluded, further, that our new course had to give to our students some elementary notion of these laws and of language change.

The second general inquiry was into the method of learning required by the subject matter and most efficient for the student. The first part of this inquiry was answered during the investigation of the subject matter. The method of all the linguists has been consistently that of inductive and experimental inquiry, and the results have been purely descriptive of objective phenomena. The inductive method — the observation and classification of data — thus appears to be the one acceptable method for the subject matter.

Children learn all their language, it is easy to see, by listening to and imitating the practices of people about them. That is the conclusion likewise of such psychiatrists as John E. Anderson of Minnesota, of linguists like Professor Leopold of Northwestern University, of philosophers like Charles Morris of Chicago, and of sociologists like Professor Bossard of the University of Pennsylvania. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that the method most likely to be fruitful for the student in language learning is that which he followed during his preschool years when he learned at the most rapid rate of his lifetime. The difference that should exist between the learning of childhood and that of the college years should be merely that the later learning should be more systematic, more controlled, and more scientifically accurate in its results. We were convinced, therefore, that the exercises and assignments we should give in our course should have a foundation of inductive inquiry and that, as Fries (*American English Grammar*, p. 291) says, it is our obligation to give the student some equipment for the observation of language phenomena.

Professor Sturtevant has pointed out also (*Introduction to Linguistic Science*, Chap. X) that all language is learned by memorizing elements observed and by the analogical substitution of one element for another. Hence we were again compelled to the belief that training the student to observe language and to understand the basic laws of language behavior are fundamental to a sound program.

Returning to our conception of general education, we found that our subject matter fitted into the ecological approach to the student's development, and its natural method fitted into our goal of integration of large areas of knowledge.

If the child learns his language from his elders in his immediate family and social group (as studies in the development of bilingual children peculiarly demonstrate), then his language patterns are environmentally associated and his meanings for the symbols are derived from his experience in the social and personal context. The proper approach, therefore, to linguistic behavior and to the teaching that is designed to enable the student to understand and control his own language reactions is through the environment.

We made, therefore, an analysis of the hypothetical typical daily environment of our freshmen. It included some sixteen

hours a day in which the student is consciously reacting to his environment. A relatively small proportion of the total significant reactions are to direct sensory stimuli, but by far the majority are to verbal substitutes for a physical world. These substitutes are both oral and written, and the student in turn both speaks and writes to influence others in his world. Only a portion of this verbal world is in formal English. In addition he employs, and responds to, manifold expressive movements either accompanying the verbal symbols or used by themselves. The ecological approach provides, then, for the understanding of language symbols, for the observation of the habits of usage, and for determining the emphasis on the subject matter of the course.

The endeavor to integrate large areas of knowledge is also served by the scientific understanding of language. Integration is possible not only with the subject areas of the general education program but with a wide variety of others as well. The integration is by three means. First, wherever symbols are employed, whether in musical notation, gesture language, accounting systems, physical and chemical formulas, or in literature, the understanding of the symbolic process and of the effect of symbols upon behavior is fundamental. (The preparation that the course offers for literature has been specially utilized in the department's general education course in literature.) The semantic aspect of our new course, then, should lay a foundation for the interpretation and use of the symbols in all other subjects. Second, since all other languages are also sets of symbols, many laws describing linguistic phenomena and linguistic change in our language are likewise applicable to all languages. Our course in Freshman English is, therefore, naturally related to courses in the foreign language departments. Third, since the inductive method is also the method of the natural sciences and is coming more and more to be the method of the social sciences, the method of our course should integrate harmoniously with the methodology of those subjects. These three kinds of relationships represent the optimum conditions for the transfer of training.

Having arrived at this stage of our inquiry and reflection, we were ready to formulate the specific goals for a course in language that would enable that part of the general education program to contribute to the goals of the total program. In doing so, we reminded ourselves again that one distinction

between a liberal arts education and a trade-school training is that in the former the skills learned have a conceptual foundation and are aimed at the development of the individual in society whereas in the latter the skills are more purely manual. The following are the objectives we set for our course.

1. The understanding of language as a set of symbols. This goal involves the knowledge of how we acquire our meanings for language symbols and of how the symbols affect us. Such an understanding should enable the student gradually to exercise some control over his responses and thereby develop a degree of semantic maturity. It should also prepare the student for the use of symbols to produce desired effects upon other people.

2. The understanding that language is environmentally determined, not only as to meaning, but as to the way of pronouncing words, the grammar used, the inflections employed, and the intonation of the speech. As a further expansion of this point of view the student should understand that each occupational and social group has its own language needs and conventions, adapted to the occasion, and that the utility and therefore the correctness of a given language form are to be determined, whether in speech or in writing, by reference to the group, the occasion, and the purpose. The achievement of this understanding, it is hoped, will lead to a sort of linguistic maturity. By this phrase is meant an attitude that admits of and tolerates individual and group differences in language behavior.

3. The awareness that the appropriate method of inquiry into language phenomena is the inductive one of observing and classifying data, according to the criteria listed under the second objective. This aim is coupled also with the goal of establishing in the student a permanent habit of inductive observation and thinking. Since the stress is upon the use of the eyes and ears for more detailed, more complete and accurate observation, the net result of this training and this habit should be a sharpening of the auditory and visual senses so that the student can receive more and finer stimuli than formerly. This sharpening implies as a necessary consequence a development of his mental powers as a whole.

4. Through the habit of systematic observation of language patterns, the gradual development of a high degree of sensi-

tivity to language differences and qualities. Two results of such a sensitivity are hoped for. The first is that the student will come to recognize a superior, or more accurate, form of expression from a less-well-phrased one, and will come to prefer and to use habitually the better kind. The second is that, because he can distinguish between the kinds of words and expressions useful in an application letter, for example, and those appropriate to a sports story, he will in practice not carry over the one form to the other situation. If, as Sturtevant says, language is learned by analogical substitution, it becomes probable that many of what are conventionally called "errors" in the writing of students are simply the results of transfers of this kind. In a formal paper the student writes flippancies appropriate only to feature stories or elliptical sentences suitable only to conversation. A part of all composition work, as well as of linguistic adjustment in general, is the avoidance of injudicious analogical substitutions of these sorts.

5. Elementary skills (in the mechanics of composition) and effectiveness, through progressive achievement of the preceding goals, in the chief communication areas that college students and graduates are most likely to need.

#### THE DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE

Because most of our freshmen come to us with the notion that college English consists of memorizing rules of grammar or rhetoric and writing "themes," our first task is to give them a broadened and truer conception of the subject matter. For this purpose, we begin with Gray's definition of language (*Foundations of Language*, p. 13). We choose this definition, not because it is superior to Sapir's, but because it both suggests a larger concept of language than the student has and also breaks the concept down into component parts which may be related to the student's own experience and which provide starting points for his observation.

The first week or so of the semester is taken up by a discussion of the various means of expressing feeling and communicating experience. The student, as his beginning of the observation of language, is required to bring to class as many examples as he possibly can of forms of communication and expression — by gestures, by variations of the pitch and volume of the voice, and by verbal symbols. These examples constitute the materials for classroom analysis so that the student

gets the impression from the beginning that the course is related to his daily experience and that language study involves more than just formal rhetoric and grammar.

This discussion leads at once to the study of language symbolism. The symbol is dealt with as both stimulus and response. It is pointed out that symbols may have primary reference to things, to attitudes toward things and other attitudes, and to other symbols. The student is asked, where it is possible for him to do so, to observe the process whereby little children learn words and their meanings for the words, to analyze, if possible, the sources of his own reactions to words, and to give word-association tests to find out how different are the responses of different people to the same verbal symbol. Other kinds of exercises are suggested to him, such as asking different people to write sentences employing a given word. He may be asked also to classify the associations and the uses into groups and to write a definition for each group which he will compare with the definitions in the dictionary. These exercises not only explain to the student why the dictionary records a number of definitions for a word, but they demonstrate to him the true origin of word meanings in individual experience and introduce him to the phenomenon of semantic change.

Having disposed, in this way, of the one-word one-meaning fallacy, the student begins the study of contexts as means of determining the meaning others have for their words and the ways of particularizing his own communication. Oral contexts are broken down into physical setting, physiological accompaniments (such as gestures, pitch, volume of voice, and so on), verbal setting, and the background of associations that the speaker has. Written contexts include the verbal setting as clues to the physical, physiological and background contexts, and also such things as titles, tables of contents, topic sentences, and key words.

The problems involved in particularizing communication are dealt with at some length. The student is given exercises in making words refer only to specific, tangible objects, as in recording processes, giving directions, ordering goods, and writing footnotes and bibliographical entries.

Another group of observations and exercises is aimed at enabling the student to limit his reference to groups or classes of like objects or to true genera. This study leads to a dis-

cussion of the bases of generic classifications, to the process of generalizing, and to the differences among the kinds of generalizing that lead to prejudicial statements and subjective judgments, to figurative expressions in language, and to the concept of a true genus. This discussion provides occasion not only to present the distinctions between fact, inference, and judgment, but also to demonstrate a recognized process of semantic change and vocabulary extension.

A third group of exercises has to do with the identity of fictions, the nature of their reference, and the processes that must be employed to discover from their contexts the meanings which they may have in a particular use.

With the information and skills that the student has at this point (about the tenth week of the first semester), he is ready for a careful discussion of the requirements of report writing. The field for his practice of the principles is large. He may be called on to write reports of what he sees in a given location, or processes observed, or events and happenings and persons. The discussion and assignments include slanted and balanced reports, the importance of full, or at least of representative data, and the relationship of the data in a report to the conclusion.

From the report the student proceeds to a study of the various means by which emotions may be aroused. These range, in the presentation of the course, from the use of fictions, through figures of speech, slanting, rhythmic devices, anecdotes, to the personalized illustrations of characters in stories and plays. Again, there are many opportunities for application of the principles and their practice during this part of the work.

Up to this point in the course the writing that the student does consists of three sorts of assignments. The first kind, which is continued throughout the year, is the collection of examples of communication by gesture, by speech, and by writing. The student describes each process of communication as exactly and completely as he can, interprets the meaning communicated, and classifies it according to a plan which he is beginning to work out for himself. If, for example, he observes an advertisement, he describes the colors, the pictures, the words employed, the type design and size, and the associations that he has as a result of the complex of these items in the advertisement.



The second kind of assignment is made of papers in which he collects numerous observations that he has made, arranges them, and attempts to draw from them some generalization about language or the communication process. Although this is, in effect, a paper developed by specific illustration, it gives practice in sound generalizing as well. In addition it re-emphasizes the inductive and empirical approach to the determination of linguistic laws and rules of practice.

The third kind of assignment consists of problems: reports, descriptions, emotional stories, propaganda pieces, and the like. In these the student applies the principles and devices discussed in class.

During this part of the course the emphasis has been on the accuracy of the observation and on finding the exact word to symbolize the thing referred to. We do not in grading pay a great deal of attention to the so-called mechanics of the student's writing because, if we have judiciously interpreted Sapir's definition, the relationship of the symbol to the thing symbolized is more important than the relationships of the word to other parts of a system. Enabling the student to refine his powers of full and accurate observation, and to find the exact words from among his observed and accumulating stock to record his sense data are greater services to him than is "correcting" his "mistakes." These are the means of developing his vocabulary in the natural, functional, effective way. Besides, not yet having learned how to observe grammatical usage, the student cannot reasonably be expected to make use of his observation of form. There is, however, some improvement in the student's usage during this period simply because more disciplined listening and reading have provided materials for him to imitate unconsciously by the same process that he employed in childhood.

This study of the semantic system of English takes twelve or fourteen weeks. We turn next to the study of usage. The student is led to observe the elementary distinctions between speech and writing, between formal and informal speech and writing, and between standard and substandard usage. He is given a guide to descriptive terminology, and he is called upon to observe and record the usages in grammar and punctuation (as secondary meaning forms) in a wide variety of materials ranging from dialect stories to formal essays and textbooks.

Following this he is led more fully into the techniques of communication in the specialized occupational areas of journalism, business, the natural and social sciences, and formal literary writing. In this part of the course, however, the emphasis in observation shifts to stylistic rather than simply grammatical usage, so that the student is led to improve the quality of his writing beyond mere formal correctness.

Besides the continual recording of observations, papers include translations of substandard into standard English, summary reports of data observed, scientific investigations and library research, and pieces of creative writing. In all these papers, of course, standard English is required. The equivalent of a semester of time is spent on this second phase of the work.

As the end of the course nears, an attempt is made to draw together all the student's new information and to orient him in the historical and world perspective of his current English. Beginning with the standard speech of his own locality, the student is led through a brief listing of the languages that lie about him, first among the Indo-European group and then among the other language families. The historical setting is presented through the brief analysis of selections from periods about fifty years apart backward to the fourteenth century. The aim in this is partly to illustrate ways in which language changes, and partly to prepare the student for the more ready acceptance of the characteristics he finds in the older texts he will read in subsequent literature courses. Finally, all this material is brought together in a summary view of language growth and change.

The course, then, begins with the student's most intimate speech habits and progresses to a world perspective of languages. It begins with the informal language of familiar situations and becomes progressively more formal. It begins with the semantics of the word and proceeds to the semantics of formal grammar and of stylistic qualities. It follows scientific theory as closely as possible, and it applies the method acceptable to science.

#### OUR PRESENT THINKING ON OUR EXPERIENCE

1. All our experience convinces us that our program is essentially sound. We believe that our preliminary investigation of the subject matter, method, and goals was necessary.

It was an honest inquiry, and we do not believe that any department should contemplate a change of program if it is not willing to make an equally detached and thorough investigation. Yet we also have come to believe (and I should like to cite James B. McMillan, "A Philosophy of Language," *College English*, April 1948) that no department can honestly face its responsibilities without radically changing from the traditional program in Freshman English. Our own inquiry into materials, methods, and goals, of course, is still going on as a form of continuing self-education.

2. A corollary of the preceding statement is that Freshman English (we still call our course by that title) is a much more complicated course to teach than we have generally assumed it to be. It requires a great deal of information on the part of the teacher in order to do the job that should be done. The usual graduate school, with its preoccupation either with historical linguistics or with the historiography of literature, simply does not equip its students with a knowledge of elementary linguistics applicable to today's language, or with an understanding of semantics, or even with a habit of induction where usage is concerned. Much less does it equip the students of English with the related field of the psychology of speech. Until it does, teachers will have to try (as we have tried and are still trying) to equip themselves.

3. In setting up a new program, whatever it may be, a continuing inservice training program for the staff will be necessary, especially if teaching methods as well as the subject matter are changed. Teachers rarely adopt new ways of presenting material without including their habitual ones whether the two groups are compatible or not. For a trivial illustration, even though neither our text nor any sourcebook for our course mentions diagramming, some of our teachers are still employing it. They cannot see that it is necessary to know the sentence before one can fit it to a diagram; or realize that they are employing an unfamiliar form — the lines of the diagram — to explain a more familiar one, the sentence; or, finally, that there is no familiar symbolism in the lines to suggest grammatical relationships. Instead, this archaic futility gets re-named visual education and continues to flourish. One is reminded of Poor Richard: "Well spoken, Mr. Fogg: thou explainest English by Greek."

4. We are convinced that a close integration of the processes of reading, writing, listening, and speaking is desirable because the symbolic process is a unitary one and cannot well be broken down into separate courses. This does not necessarily mean that public speaking belongs in the course, but it does mean that speech should be observed and dealt with in its relation to writing, and that there should be some speech activity such as oral reports, along with written assignments.

5. We are convinced, too, that we have found the logical bases for the integration of Freshman English with the subject matter of other courses in English and of other departments in the university. We fall short in the application of the principles of language symbolism to the interpretation and criticism of literature, but we feel that we are making great strides in that direction. Here again it is a matter of self-education, but self-education in an as-yet-undeveloped field. Teachers of courses in literature themselves constantly need to use the knowledge of language symbolism in interpretation, and they need even more to take their students back repeatedly to those principles as a foundation. There is just as much need for teachers in other departments to relate their treatment of symbols to the course in English, and some of them at Drake are beginning to do so. It is needless to add they should correlate their demands for writing competence with those of the English department.

6. We feel that there is yet a great deal to be done in exploring the workings of the student's mind in its use of language symbols. His speech and writing are governed by the same language laws that have made present-day English what it is. It is futile for us to try to withstand these laws as preservers of the tongue as it is, and on the other hand the laws explain how the student came to make his so-called "error." It seems wise, therefore, to keep the laws in mind in grading freshman writing and so try to help the student to control the functioning of the principles. In other words, we should concern ourselves with the mental processes that produce an "error" at least as much as with the error itself.

7. The course in language, we feel, should have as its subject matter for papers and assignments the phenomena of language. Students will not learn the usage of language by gathering data on football nearly as quickly or as thoroughly as when gather-

ing data on the language itself. There is very little time at best for the amount of material the student should learn.

8. Finally, English teachers should cease going into the market place to learn what they should teach and how to teach it. In our preparation of texts, in choosing texts, in organizing our courses we all too often aim at conformity with the prevailing fashion, which may mean at the lowest common denominator of teaching and courses.

## The Task of the Listener

THE WORD-MANIPULATING professions have, of necessity grown in importance with increasing economic interdependency in a technological world. The more industrialized society becomes, the more carefully must human effort be coordinated — and this coordination is achieved by language. The more interdependent society becomes, the more communications there must be. The need for everyone to be understood (or at last to be heard) by other persons, by other classes of society, by people of other faiths, occupations, other economic interests, other nationalities, is a direct outcome of this vast social interdependency which industrialization has created.

The result of this vast need for communication created by the modern world is familiar to us all. The citizen of today, Christian or Jew or Mohammedan, financier or farmhand, stockbroker or stockboy, has to interpret more words a day than the citizen of any earlier time in world history. Literate or semiliterate, we are assailed by words all day long: news commentators, soap operas, campaign speeches, newspapers, the propaganda of pressure groups or governments — all of these trying to tell us something, to manipulate our beliefs, whether about the kind of toothpaste to use or the kind of economic system to support. We are told these many things sometimes for our own good, and sometimes for the good of those who tell us and not for ours. We are living in a time when millions of dollars are spent each day by people who want to make up our minds for us.

It is natural that this kind of climate should generate widespread scepticism. Confronted by the clamor of a thousand contradictory voices, our tendency is to say "Let's not believe anybody!" We therefore have many sceptics in the modern world — people who simply refuse to believe anything. In my own experience I have found that such sceptics belong to

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two large groups: first, there is the working class group of sceptics, who tend to disbelieve all newspapers, all the propaganda of the employing classes, and most of the propaganda of their union leaders. They are left believing, by and large, only what they learn from face-to-face contact with people whom they have learned to know and trust.

The second class of sceptics is found among those who are themselves in the word-manipulating professions. They have seen, or been party to, so many phony publicity stunts, slanted news stories, deceptive political campaigns, or ill-advised public relations drives, that they take a kind of professional pride in not believing anything. I should also include in this class of sceptics some academic people of my acquaintance who are so clever that they see through everything: the logical weaknesses of the arguments for capitalism or against it; the weaknesses of the arguments both of theists and atheists; the shortcomings of science and the shortcomings of the alternatives to science. These sceptics of the word-manipulating class are perhaps in an even sadder state than the working-class sceptics, because the latter at least continue to believe in each other as partners in work, and they believe in the realities of their work. When a man digs potatoes, he does not doubt the reality and validity of potatoes. But the sceptic of the word-manipulating class is sceptical above all things of the validity and worth of his own work, because if all communications are suspect, so are his own. This conviction leads to the kind of disintegration into cynicism (and sometimes drink) not uncommon in the journalistic profession, in advertising, in politics, and (we are forced to admit) in academic life.

## II

But the problems of the sceptic, whether naive or sophisticated, are the problems confronting everyone who lives in an age of the loudspeaker, the power press, and the mass circulation media. How does anyone find the needle of legitimate meaning in the haystacks of nonsense? How does one find the few cuts of real beefsteak hidden somewhere, we hope, in the carloads of baloney? It is in this situation that, in our time, the science of semantics has arisen. Briefly stated, semantics is the study of the relationships between symbol and reality, between language and behavior, between words and

their consequences.<sup>1</sup> One of the basic questions of semantics, then, is, "What *kinds* of meaning can language convey?"

If I may simplify (or oversimplify) the answers given to this question in semantic literature, a useful way of classifying the functions of language is to divide them into four.<sup>2</sup> First, there is the *informative* function, an example of which is found in such a sentence as "The car is in the garage." The "truth" of an informative statement is determined by looking *beyond the words and at the facts*. In other words, one looks into the garage to see if the car is there.

Second, there is language that is used to set up language. This I shall call (after the terminology of Charles Morris) the *systemic* use of language. Before we can say, "The car is in the garage," we have to come to some agreement as to what we shall call "cars," "garages," and so on. Systemic language gives *information about our linguistic systems* so that information about the world may be conveyed. Language is not merely names, but systems of names and named relationships. (The number system, for example, is a system of consecutive sound-clusters socially agreed upon as being applicable in a certain, pre-established *order*.) The "truth" of systemic statements is determined by *logical consistency*.

Third, there is the *directive* function of language. A statement of the kind, "No parking," says nothing descriptive about the world. It simply tries to *control future behavior*.

Fourth, there is what may be called the *expressive* or *valuative* function of language, in which one expresses preferential feelings toward something: "That's a lovely hat you have on," "The free enterprise system is the finest system on earth."

### III

This, however, is the barest skeleton of our system of classification. Language being infinitely rich and complex, and human beings being endlessly resourceful in styles of saying

<sup>1</sup>A major aspect of this study is the contrast between healthy and pathological reactions to symbols (including the linguistic) drawn by A. Korzybski in *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics* (Lancaster, Pa., 1931). See also Wendell Johnson, *People in Quarantines* (New York: Harper, 1946); Irving J. Lee, *Language Habits in Human Affairs* (New York: Harper, 1941); Hayakawa, *Language in Action* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1941).

<sup>2</sup>See especially Charles Morris, *Signs, Language, and Behavior* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1946).



things, we rarely have the four uses of language in simple, clearly recognizable form. Some of the complexities can be exemplified in a few sample sentences drawn from everyday life; the full complexities can, of course, only be studied in whole pages of rich and thoughtful prose or verse. But here are some trivial samples:

"*Magic Baking Powder contains no alum.*" This statement is on the surface informative. It has valuative connotations, however, since it is implied that inferior baking powders contain alum. It also has a directive function, suggesting that you buy this kind.

"*Bill is a communist.*" Although this statement is systemic in form, it can, depending on context, be used informatively, directly, or valuatively.

"*Best motor oil.*" Ordinarily valuative, but in technical discourse where such criteria as the Society of Automotive Engineers' standards are previously agreed upon, this statement can be informative.

"If you spell it backwards, it spells 'Nature's.'" This is, I suppose, a systemic statement, but it is certainly used for its valuative and directive implications.

One logical consequence of this fourfold distinction of the functions of language is that there are at least four different meanings possible for the expression "talking sense." We must all talk some kind of sense in order to be believed. One can talk sense informatively, systemically, directly, or valuatively. Each function of language has its own criteria of meaningfulness. In order to examine these, let us look at these four uses of language at their highest development, since obviously the most important linguistic events do not remain forever at the simple-minded levels of discourse quoted in the examples above.

The sum-total of all the verified statements made in carefully refined informative language—information about the earth, stars, animals, plants, society, digestion, health—constitute the body of knowledge which we call science. What we call "good reporting" and "accurate description" are also high products of the informative uses of language. It is the concern of the scientist, whatever his field, to describe accurately, to report well, and to increase the number, the scope, and the generality of his verifiable statements. In one sense of the term, the scientist's language represents one kind of semantic ideal.

But before the scientist can talk sense at all, he has to set up a vocabulary and a language. For this reason, systemic training is part of the training of a scientist: he has to learn chemical symbols, mathematics, systems of notation, systems of weights and measures, all of which are special refinements of language. Logic is also a systemic discipline; it tells what statements may legitimately follow what other statements—it says nothing at all about the informative truth of statements as they apply to the world outside of language. Mathematics is also pure systemic discourse. It sets up languages of a variety of structures, enabling specialized accurate discourse about an indefinite number of actual or imagined situations. Grammar, too, is a systemic discipline, and it is a sound tradition that insists that all students be taught grammar. However, there is something radically wrong with the way it is ordinarily taught. The effect of systemic discipline is normally to make discourse possible. But the effect of usual grammatical instruction is to paralyze students so that they become afraid to use their own language.

I have said that logical consistency is the important criterion of talking sense in systemic language. In practical terms, such consistency means, in our own utterances, that what we say at one moment should bear a recognizable relationship to what we say at other moments. Unless some consistent relationship exists internally among the many utterances we make from time to time, we shall not be talking sense.

Directive discourse, at its highest generality, is what we have traditionally called "ethics" and "moral ideals." Religions, too, are powerful systems of directives, giving us commandments about our attitudes and behavior. Another class of directives is law, which is the body of directives agreed upon by the members of any given society as necessary to be obeyed if that society is to continue to function. Still another class of directives is exemplified by advertising and propaganda.

How does one talk sense in directive utterances? Every directive, it seems to me, implies a promise, whether trivial or grave, whether limited or general. Certain satisfactions are promised as the result of obeying. The person who talks sense in directives is he who predicts accurately the consequences of following his directives.

The highest development of valuative utterance is to be found in literature: the novel, the drama, poetry. Excellence

in valuative utterance means that sensitive and subtle valuations have been made, exploring new areas of feeling, making new perceptions possible, enlarging human experience; it also means that the writer has not only managed to state his perceptions, but has also made the reader or listener know what it feels like to make such valuations. This, perhaps, is the ultimate magic of language: that Joseph Conrad has been to sea, and that we should feel, reading his novels, something of what he felt; that Shelley felt in the west wind a powerful symbol of his personal aspiration to be "destroyer and creator," and that we should, reading his poem, feel something of his revolutionary spirit.

I am not saying that literature and poetry are simply valuative, but that valuative content is a major ingredient. There are certainly systemic elements in all of art. The differences between a rambling narrative and a novel is that the latter is given an additional dimension by the fact that the novelist has ordered his events into a system of symbols that have a structure and a consistent set of internal relationships.

One criterion of meaningfulness in valuative utterance is what we ordinarily call "sincerity," which simply means that when a man says, "My heart leaps up when I behold a rainbow in the sky," these words should stand for some kind of actual pleasurable excitations going on in the speaker's nervous system. Valuative language, like scientific language, must be refined and elaborated in order to make finer distinctions possible. The scientist cannot be limited, in his discussion of temperature, to the two words, "hot" and "cold." Similarly, whatever some of our less articulate friends may believe, valuative utterances cannot be limited simply to such terms as "swell" and "lousy." Literature performs the function, among others, of constantly refining valuative language, so that finer distinctions of valuation become statable.

#### IV

As stated at the beginning, the task of the citizen today, to an unprecedented degree, is to distinguish sense from nonsense, confronted as we are by the greatest deluge of words that human beings have ever faced. And because of the profound interdependency of the modern world, the penalties of not being able to distinguish sense from nonsense are severe. If employers believe a great deal of nonsense that is told them about labor unions, or if union members believe a great

deal of nonsense about employers, the consequences are grave enough to involve the entire community. If we are told about the British experiment in socialized medicine solely through the nonsense of extreme partisans for and against socialized medicine, there will be no way in which we can profit from British experience. Even more seriously, if a time ever comes when nonsense crowds out all or almost all sense from radio, journalism, and the mass media, so that people are thrown into complete confusion, the word-manipulating professions, by having betrayed their basic trust of communicating accurately and well, will have created the conditions under which civilization will no longer be able to survive—because civilization depends on communications faithfully made and therefore to some degree heeded. How to tell sense from nonsense is a crucial problem, therefore, to the listener, in order to insure his own survival, and to the speaker and writer, in order that they may faithfully perform their tasks.

How, then, does one distinguish sense from nonsense? I believe that there is a general method in which we can be trained in this useful art. It is simply that we be trained to talk sense ourselves. Those who have disciplined themselves to talk sense can tell whether or not others are talking sense, in the same way that people who have played baseball (even if unskillfully) can understand a professional ballgame better than those who have not.

Let me explore some of the implications of this principle for academic life. It is clear, first of all, that no department of knowledge has a monopoly in talking sense, since there are at least four different kinds of sense. There is a tendency among some scientists to believe that they alone talk sense, while philosophers and literary people talk sentimental nonsense. Philosophers and literary people retaliate by holding that what they talk is a "higher wisdom," while the utterances of scientists are merely "instrumental" knowledge for which exaggerated claims are made. Nevertheless, it is clear that since all of us, in everyday living, have need of all four kinds of sense, it is absurd for the scientist, the politician, the logician, the philosopher, or the poet to claim that his words are more important or more meaningful than those of other occupations. In semantic theory we see the true unity of all knowledge. Evaluative discourse must be based on knowledge of the world as it is, which knowledge is a function of informative uses of

language. Science, which is the accumulation of informative statements, although often claiming not to deal with values, is itself based on some of the most general values in existence, such as the preference of truth over error, of generality over the cataloguing of unrelated data, of intellectual cooperation over concealment and secrecy. Society itself does not exist except by virtue of commonly agreed-upon directives. And all other functions of language are made possible because each of them is refined by means of systemic disciplines. The four functions of language are therefore profoundly interrelated, and no one can afford not to avail himself of the resources of all of them. Those who fail to avail themselves of the accurate informative language of the medical profession are left at the mercy of the inaccurate information of patent-medicine ads. Those who fail to heed the highest directives of philosophy and religion obey instead the narrower directives of one's own special interest group, one's social class, or one's gang. Similarly with valuative utterances: those who fail to refine their valuations through contact with the best in literature, philosophy, and ethics, evaluate none the less, but they do so with the valuative clichés of the Hearst editorial, the drug-store greeting card, the movie fan magazine, Gabriel Heatter, and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Those who think they can live without science live by pseudo-science. Those who think they can live without poetry live by pseudo-poetry. A thorough understanding of semantic theory has the effect in education of cutting across departmental lines, unifying professions across disciplines formerly regarded as distinct and separate.

I shall not go into detail about the ways in which semantic theory affects education within the various subject-matter disciplines, but I shall sum them up in one sweeping generalization. In order to train our students in talking sense, we must first and foremost set them the example. When we inform, we must give the criteria by which our information may be checked. When we teach linguistic systems, we must demonstrate the need of special languages. When we direct, we must show reasoned grounds in social convention or in practical consequences of following our directive. When we evaluate, we must evaluate sensitively, earnestly, sincerely.

These are difficult prescriptions, because we are all caught in a semantic environment in which the rewards of life go not necessarily to him who talks sense, but to him who talks

fast. Many of us have learned that technique and have practised it successfully for so many years that we have forgotten that any other formula exists. As Wendell Johnson has said, "Every speaker is his own most interested and affected listener" — and many of us in education have talked so plausibly for so long that we have come to believe what we say.

Furthermore, in certain branches of knowledge nonsense has been institutionalized, so that we have to memorize large amounts of it in order to get our advanced degrees. The reader may take his choice of examples on this point: according to logical positivists, much of philosophy is institutionalized nonsense; according to Veblen, most traditional economics is nonsense; according to Jerome Frank and Felix Cohen, so is much of law; according to Thurman Arnold there is much traditional nonsense to be found in political science.<sup>3</sup> I feel that I memorized much nonsense in literary criticism and theory for my degree in English. But whatever these areas of institutionalized delusion may be, we who are trained in them have invested too much of our lives in them to start doubting their validity in middle age. So we go on talking.

Let me sum up. The task of the communication arts today is desperately urgent. We all have so much to learn, so much to understand, so much to unlearn, in order to function in the modern world. Whole new areas of new knowledge in science, technology, and social thought have opened up in the past few decades. We are called upon in addition now to understand the peoples of all parts of the earth if we are to live at peace with them. More than ever, everybody needs to know more and evaluate more adequately, and if we remain stupid and ignorant about the implications of modern technology and about the nature of the peoples of Russia and Asia and Europe and the Middle East, there will be a terrible price to pay.

Communication — accurate, meaningful communication — is urgent. Yet, as we all know, meaningless and misleading communication floods the newsstands, all but monopolizes the airwaves, and is rapidly taking over television. In order to

<sup>3</sup>See Rudolf Carnap, *Philosophy and Logical Syntax* (London: Regan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1935); Alfred J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York, Oxford U. P., 1936); Thorstein Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Modern Library); Jerome Frank, *Law and the Modern Mind* (New York: Brentano, 1930); Felix S. Cohen, "Transcendental Nonsense and the Functional Approach," *ETC.: A Review of General Semantics*, II (Winter, 1944-45), 82-115; Thurman W. Arnold, *The Symbols of Government and The Folklore of Capitalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935 and 1937).

sort the sense from nonsense — in order that people may begin to protest the nonsense that crowds almost all else off the mass media, there needs to be developed a public passion for sense. And it is this passion that we must develop in our courses in communication.

Edmund Taylor, the war correspondent who wrote *Richer by Asia*, says in that book that the real enemy of mankind is the delusion inside the heads of so-called normal men. By delusion, he means what I have called nonsense — but especially the nonsense we talk to ourselves *and believe*. The delusions of the mentally ill are sufficiently obvious to be guarded against, but the shared delusions of normal people: the delusions Russians have about America and Americans have about Russia; the delusions whites have about Negroes and Negroes have about whites — these are dangerous because they are not known by those who hold them to be delusions. Freeing the world of delusion is then a fundamental task of peace: undeluding Europe about Asia, Asia about America, America about Europe; undeluding Russians about America and Americans about Russia, and, perhaps most important of all, undeluding Americans about America and Russians about Russia. When the myths are cleared from people's eyes the world over, we may finally see each other not as hobgoblins but as men. But where does one start clearing up the delusions the whole world suffers from? Taylor says that one of necessity starts with oneself: "Any victory over delusion in a single mind is a blow struck at the accumulation of group delusion which is the main cause of the world's disunity."

Communication is a mediatory art. Mediation, more often than not, means clearing up people's delusions about themselves and others so that human cooperation can begin. The teaching of communication cannot stop, therefore, with the inculcation of such verbal skills as merely enable the writer or speaker to be more agreeable or plausible or persuasive, and enable the listener or reader to follow the meaning of what is said. It must go beyond these skills to a philosophical and ethical perception of the role of communication in human life. For the only settling of human conflict by other than communicative means is resort to force. And we can no longer afford to use force.

## The Course in Verbal Communication at the University of Illinois

WHEN THE Division of General Studies was set up at the University of Illinois in 1940, the curriculum included a course which might have been called Communication if the label had been in use then. It was called Verbal Expression. It is to be called Verbal Communication in the timetable for the second semester of 1948-49. Without going into the story of the development of the course, I shall sketch briefly the theory upon which its present organization is based and the detailed plan of its operation.

### GENERAL THEORY OF THE COURSE

The assumption which has perhaps the greatest influence in shaping the course is a rather sharp distinction between professional and practical writing and speaking. What we call professional writing and speaking is that which puts upon its author some such label as writer or speaker, the sort of thing that gets published or that people gather together to hear. What we call practical writing and speaking is the activity which everyone of us must engage in in doing his particular bit of work in the world, in meeting his social obligations, and in participating in the affairs of our democracy. We are immediately concerned with both levels of communication, but in different ways.

For reading and listening we deal with works produced at the professional level. Perhaps level is not the best term; the differentiation assumes that the professional work is higher only in the sense that at its best it contains all that the practical work contains and something more. Our decision here is not altogether determined by the fact that only professional materials are available for study. The mastery of techniques of interpretation at the professional level is necessary for all men because all men receive communications at that level.

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By Lee S. Hultzén, assistant professor of speech in the Division of General Studies, University of Illinois.



All men read professional writing, newspapers, magazines, and books; and all men listen to professional speaking, here, there, and over the radio. It hardly needs to be noted that the technique of interpretation for professional works includes all of the technique of interpretation for practical works.

Insofar as we deal with what are known as literary materials, we consider interpretation only, not criticism. We do not so much try to decide whether this is a good or bad poem, story, or essay as to find out what the author said. We are above all concerned with systematic procedures for interpretation. For example, we work out the proportion in a metaphor as it stands instead of groping for clarification by substituting other metaphors. But when dealing with persuasive materials—we reject the distinction, based on a long out-moded psychology, between conviction by argument and persuasion by emotional appeal—we go beyond interpretation to critical examination of evidence and inference. This distinction between interpretation only of literary works and interpretation plus criticism of persuasive works is of course dictated by our notion that not all men need be literary critics, although all should be able to read literature; whereas all men in a democracy do need to be critical of persuasions, of what is called propaganda when the other fellow puts it out.

We deal with writing and speaking only, or almost only, on the practical level. Few of our students will ever be professional writers or speakers, whereas all will have to write or speak in order to be good workers and good citizens. We should like to believe that students entering college have had considerable training in practical writing, and possibly also in practical speaking. But it seems to be generally true that the emphasis in much of their earlier writing has been on originality and the expression of individuality rather than on concern for the reader, on making things interesting as much as on communicating information or idea, on tricky forms such as short stories or radio scripts rather than on the basic types of prose communication. What college freshmen most need is to forget the trimmings and get back to simple, straightforward writing and talking, to understand that, in comparison with obscurity, triteness is a venial sin. And we are fairly sure that those who plan to fly as professional authors and orators will do well to spend this year at ground school.

One rather obvious thing about communication is that we always have to have a great deal of consideration for the man at the other end of the communication and none for ourselves. Just as we were, at the receiving end, concerned with finding out what the sender meant, so here, at the sending end, we are concerned with what the receiver wants. We were willing to expend effort to clear up the obscurities in our author; now we put all our effort into avoiding obscurities for our reader, into making everything so clear that he can easily understand and cannot misunderstand. Clarity is the desideratum. Perhaps accuracy comes before clarity, and after it proportion and emphasis. But no cleverness, no expression of the individuality of the writer or speaker as mere expression of individuality is wanted.

We make a distinction in practical writing and speaking that parallels although it is not the same as that between literary and persuasive works for reading and listening. We group together narration, description, and exposition as types of communication which appear most frequently in and can best be handled as distinct types in writing. Persuasive communication on the practical level where it touches most people we consider to be primarily a matter of speechmaking. In the earlier exercises, where there is advantage in considering the types separately, we hold to this distinction: a student writes narrations, and so forth, and speaks persuasions. In later exercises we recognize the interplay of all types and the possibility that any may be written and any spoken. But the distinction goes beyond the matter of written or oral presentation.

The usual practical situation which calls for narrative or descriptive or simple expository writing is one in which the writer knows something which the reader does not know and wants to know. We therefore put students to work producing narratives, descriptions, and expositions out of what they already know or have ready opportunity to get to know without any special effort of investigation. We let them assume that the reader wants to know what happened or what the thing looked like or how it worked, so that there is no need for attention-catching or justifying introductions or for any devices to make the writing interesting. We do not object to interesting writing; but we do not insist upon it, and we do

not allow any amount of brilliance in making things interesting to compensate for failure to make things clear.

In the earlier exercises we distinguish among narration, description, and exposition, and ask students to turn out works of one type at a time. We do this, not because the types are or ought to be sharply distinguished in all practical writing, but because there are certain structural patterns, for example, order, which differ from one type to another and can best be dealt with singly. The only kind of form we demand is the form essential to the type, for example, the establishing of literal point of view and determination of scope and order by that point of view in description.

In persuasion the usual practical situation is rather different. The hearer may not want at all to be persuaded. Indeed the hearer whom it is most important to persuade is likely to resist persuasion. He may not even be willing to listen. The speaker must, then, plan to do something to get the hearer's attention, to make him interested. Even here the speaker's task is not to be interesting for the sake of being interesting, but only to get the hearer interested in the matter in hand.

Moreover, the speaker in the usual practical situation cannot altogether rely on his ready store of information. In addition to mastering the techniques of persuasion, as he did those of narration and so forth, he has to master techniques of investigation. Anything like a real persuasive situation, fairly easy to bring about in the classroom, makes a demand upon the student for research in the best sense of the term. All of the apparatus of research, use of the library, footnote reference, and bibliography, the student can get to understand in connection with his preparation of a persuasive speech.

So much for the general theory of the course. A few incidental details can best be taken up in connection with the explanation of the content of the course below.

### MECHANICS

Nothing has been said about writing as grammatical penmanship or speaking as orality. The principal work of the course does not concern itself with such matters. But of course not all students are grammatically and vocally up to standard. It happens for our setup that the grammatically quite incompetent are weeded out by a university system of placement

examination. For those students who get by the examination and yet have marked deficiencies in any branch of the mechanics of writing, we prescribe individual exercises in spelling or punctuation or whatever detail needs attention. These exercises are entirely outside the main business of the course and affect grades only as the results show up in the regular writing assignments and examinations. The worst cases we send to a writing clinic which the department of English has set up as a university service.

Similarly we prescribe vocal exercises for or send to the speech clinic students who do not speak intelligibly, at a satisfactory rate, with sufficient force, with reasonable variety, and in a dialect which they themselves approve. We also offer assistance to those with reading difficulties, or send them to the reading clinic of the student counseling bureau. We hope some time to have special help in listening.

No student is required to review a mechanical skill in which he is already proficient.

#### CONTENT

The course in Verbal Communication is a four-hour course continuing throughout the year, open to all students who have passed the Rhetoric Proficiency Test. All qualified freshmen in the Division of General Studies and in a few other curricula normally take the course and it may be elected by others. It meets the university requirement in rhetoric and the prerequisite requirement for certain courses in English and in speech. The current enrollment is something over one hundred sixty.

There are two lecture meetings a week where all students are gathered together, and two discussion meetings a week in groups of not over twenty students. What discussion of the theory of written and spoken communication can be carried on with a large group and practically all in-class writing, examinations, and tests are taken care of in the lecture meetings. The time of the discussion meetings is devoted to active student participation: reporting on interpretation, reading aloud, making speeches, and discussing specific details.

The textbooks are: a collection of verse, a collection of prose, a handbook of English, a college-level dictionary, mimeographed materials, and, for the second semester only, three numbers of a monthly periodical dealing with subjects of cur-

rent interest. Students are called upon to read and report on a specified amount of supplementary reading in English and American literature, most of which they find outside the collections prescribed.

The thirty lectures and thirty discussion meetings each semester are at present scheduled in the following order.

*First Semester:*

1. A first lecture dealing with administrative detail and general explanation.

2-7. Six lectures on interpretation

We consider two aspects of interpretation: what goes on between the printed page or the loudspeaker and the mind of the interpreter, and what goes on between the mind of the interpreter and his tongue or pen. As a matter of practical limitation and with some notion of getting at techniques which will want continuous attention throughout the course, we deal in these lectures primarily with minutiae of grammatical interpretation, that is, with discovery of the exact meaning of the passage examined, and with the externalization of this meaning by reading aloud. For material we choose short lyric poems or crucial passages from longer poems. Poetry offers cruxes in small compass, often in a single word, so that we are able in a limited time to deal with several different approaches to interpretation and several examples of each. Poetry also wants to be read aloud, as most prose does not. But our concern is with language as communication and not with poetry as a literary form, and all the techniques are as useful for prose as for poetry.

As already noted, we follow systematic procedures for discovering meaning. We also consider systematic procedures for oral communication of the meaning discovered, especially in intonational patterns. Explanation of the function of intonation and of other vocal patterns in communication, both in general theory and in application to specific situations, takes up much of the lecturing time. Part or all of the last lecture hour of this unit is given over to student performance, a bit of choral reading with the solo and small-group parts taken by students recommended by the section instructors.

In the section meetings of this unit much of the time is devoted to oral reading of prose and of other poetry than that

taken up in the lectures, with discussion of detailed interpretation either before the reading or when the reading shows such discussion to be necessary. Some of the reports on interpretation are in writing. We also pay attention to larger patterns of interpretation by requiring at least two outlines or *précis* of whole works.

During these first three weeks the section instructors discover and prescribe special exercises for those students whose speech is deficient or whose writing has glaring faults.

8. A lecture on practical as contrasted with professional writing.

This lecture is introductory to the following unit. We consider the situations which call for practical narration, description, and exposition, and the demands which such situations make on the writer. We make an attempt to distinguish in the articles read in preparation for this lecture between the basic structure of communication and the professional touches which give the articles market value.

9-19. Eleven lectures on practical narration, description, and simpler exposition.

Each type of practical writing is discussed in detail in two lectures. The discussion covers function of the type, point of view of the writer and his relation to the material, order or possible orders of arrangement, kind of detail required, imagery and special vocabulary of the type and the necessity of considering the reader, special devices available, and the consideration of proportion and emphasis.

Immediately after the two lectures on narration, the students view and listen to a ten-minute moving picture, an episode from or a cutting of a commercial film, and spend the rest of the hour writing in the lecture hall a narrative of what happened. They are instructed to look upon the moving picture as an incident they have actually observed and to write a narrative for the benefit of someone who has not seen and wants to know; they are not to criticize the film as an artistic production. Similarly after the two lectures on description, the students spend a lecture hour describing on paper some visual pattern which they have been instructed in advance to observe, such as a specified portion of the campus. After the two lectures on exposition, the students spend a

lecture hour writing an exposition on a subject of their own choosing. We have not yet been able to find a common subject of exposition which would not present unfair difficulties to some students. Our present requirement is that the subject of the exposition should be approved by the section instructor before the date of writing and that each student prepare in advance an outline to be handed in with his complete manuscript.

In this unit we also give an examination, in which we endeavor to include a variety of types of questions, and at the next meeting discuss examination as a form of communication. The examination covers the material of the lectures to date and also certain assigned chapters in the handbook. It is so scheduled as to come before the midsemester period when freshman grades have to be reported.

In the section meetings of this unit most of the time is devoted to detailed study of the narrative, descriptive, and expository patterns and devices used in our prose collection or in articles which students bring to class. Instructors are left free to take up any matter which the group as a whole wishes to discuss. For example, a section meeting shortly before examination time may be devoted to a discussion of one of the assigned chapters in the handbook.

Since the section instructors have comparatively few themes to read, they are expected to criticize each one very thoroughly. They also make themselves available to students for conference on a somewhat more generous scale than is possible in a many-theme scheme.

#### 20-25. Six lectures on practical deliberative speechmaking

Our consideration of persuasion is actually limited to deliberation, that is, the discussion of propositions which involve the possibility of some action by the audience. It is discussions of this sort, looking to group decision, that all students may expect to participate in, as citizens or as members of social or occupational organizations.

The lectures deal with the theory of deliberation where the speaker is a member of the group, not a specialist or propagandist from outside the group. He need not have any special knowledge which the other members of the group do not have, although in any specific situation he is expected to inform him-

self to the best of his ability. He has only to believe in the desirability of some course of action which not all the audience desire or to have perceived some implication in the situation which not all have perceived.

The theory includes: methodology in analyzing propositions and in discovering audience attitudes; study of audience motives, especially as distinguished from the speaker's own motives; methods of handling material so as to satisfy the demands of and to take into consideration the motives of the audience; methods of gathering material; a very strict method of organizing material in outline form to show patterns of inference. The treatment of the theory is in most respects introductory to further development during the second semester.

In the section meetings of this unit and on to the end of the semester most of the time is devoted to student speechmaking. Each student selects a subject and formulates a proposition on which he speaks throughout this period. If several students choose the same proposition, so much the better. Each contribution is a speech fragment, without elaborate form, rather than an artistically rounded whole. It is our notion that most practical speechmaking at the level where every citizen participates is in small bits related to the immediate business in hand.

In order to give each student as much practice as possible, we plan on three or four three-minute fragment speeches, and one about eight minutes long for the final appearance of the semester. For each we set specific requirements. Thus for one round all students will be dealing with some part of the state of affairs which gives rise to a problem: the advocate of socialized medicine will deal with the inequitable distribution of medical care or the lack of hospitals or the burden of expense, and the opponent of socialized medicine will be pointing out that these conditions are not bad or not so bad as they are said to be. For another round all will be trying to make their fellows believe that the blame for that state of affairs is or is not to be laid at the door of the institution or practice he would or would not like to have changed; that the inequitable distribution of medical care is or is not brought about by our system of private practice. And so forth. It is to be noted that the kind of evidence and inference required may differ from round to round but will be pretty much the same



for all the speeches in any one round. Just as we dealt with the techniques of narration at one time and not with those of prose writing in general, so now we deal at one time with the techniques of one aspect of deliberation and not with those of speechmaking or even of deliberation in general.

The method of conducting the speechmaking sessions is very informal. One student is appointed chairman. Any student may then get the floor in the usual parliamentary way and say what he has to say. There is no apparent program, no introduction of speakers. Those students who have been appointed to speak that day must get the floor by addressing the chair and are expected to go to the front of the room to speak and to speak for the prescribed time. Any other student can get the floor and make what comment he wishes to make on a subject which has been introduced by a scheduled speaker. The chairman sees to it that all appointed speakers have opportunity to speak, but he does not call on them by name.

Each scheduled speaker hands to the instructor at the beginning of the hour an outline of his contribution for the day. The outline form is simple: a statement of the proposition which he is speaking on throughout the period; a statement of the specific proposition or detail on which he is speaking that day; a starting sentence, to be discarded if anything a previous speaker has said gives him a better opening; a series of statements with the usual indentation and symbolization, arranged according to the idea that if the members of the audience believe a subordinate statement, they will be inclined to believe the statement to which it is subordinate, and each statement which does not have anything under it indexed for a footnote at the bottom of the page stating the source of the material or idea; and a tag line or stopping device which is expected to be the last thing the speaker will say.

The instructor makes notes on each bit of scheduled speaking, using a pad of forms which allow a certain amount of checking and some free comment. He hands the notes to the individual students at the end of the hour, retaining carbon copies for his files. The instructor makes whatever comment he wishes to make whenever he wishes to make it, but as a rule does not interfere with the progress of the speaking.

26-30. Five lectures on this and that.

Five lecture periods are left free for whatever matters may want discussion. In the middle of this semester we had one lecture on speeded silent reading, preceded by one and followed by three fifteen-minute reading-rate and comprehension tests at weekly intervals in the section meetings. We plan in the other four lectures, in the interval between Christmas vacation and final examinations, to take up certain questions of grammar as related to practical communication rather than as authoritarian prescriptions. We expect to extend anon the specific work on efficiency in silent reading, and we hope to develop a similar approach to listening.

The final examination covers the theory of the course and includes some exercise in written composition.

*Second semester:*

1-6. Six lectures on verse form.

This unit may seem not to fit in with the main plan of the course. Our idea is that, after the minimal attention to artistic form in the first semester, we want to deal with a type of communication in which form is both essential and obvious before we go on to the comparatively subtle prose form with which we shall be dealing.

The lectures consider in detail all formal patterns in some twenty sonnets. The attention is all on form or on the correlation of substance with form, with only so much detailed interpretation as is necessary for understanding, and no literary history. Students write an original poem, about sonnet length but not a sonnet.

The corresponding discussion meetings deal with other verse forms, reading aloud, and some of the problems of composition in verse.

7-18. Twelve lectures on speechmaking and writing coordinated in a practical situation.

This unit is a continuation and development of that covered in lectures 20-25 of the first semester, with a fairly equal distribution of emphasis between writing and speaking. We choose the field of deliberation as offering the greatest, and probably most obvious, opportunity for consideration of the audience, that is, for studying communication in terms of satisfying the reader or hearer. It is also a practical field in that it allows something like reality in the classroom situation.

The lectures of this unit are not all given consecutively or necessarily in the order indicated. The distribution of emphasis is somewhat as follows:

Two or three lectures on the analysis of propositions involving a program of action. The lectures consider the implications of various kinds of propositions and what typical or specific audiences demand to be shown, as determined by their knowledge of, interest in, and attitudes toward a particular course of action.

One lecture on panel discussion as a technique.

Two or three lectures on the motive bases of deliberation. Consideration is given to the places where agreement can be found, generally accepted premises, and the ways of thinking on the basis of which people make up their minds in practical affairs.

Two lectures on the types of deliberative inference, to be distinguished from the inference of formal logic.

Two or three lectures on the manifestation of the character of speaker or writer as it tends to make his statements of fact or opinion accepted by an audience.

Two lectures on narration, description, and exposition in deliberation. These types are now considered in situations where they subserve some other purpose than that of satisfying an audience eager to know.

In the corresponding discussion meetings each student or, preferably, each group of four or five students deals with one proposition throughout most of the semester. A subject which turns out to be unprofitable may be discarded, and a few exercises may deal with some other subject. About half of the creative composition is written, half spoken. The present schedule of exercises is as follows:

A written report covering all of the deliberative problems involved. The detail to be covered is specified. This report is the most important exercise in the series. It is not submitted in final form until after the problems with which it deals have been discussed in the lectures.

A panel discussion by each group. Those students who are not in any group dealing with one proposition select a special subject for this exercise.

A full exposition, written, of the plan of action which each student is advocating or opposing.

A short bit of narrative and a short bit of description fitted into the plan of deliberation. Each bit is written, and if time allows is read from manuscript.

Three short bits of extemporaneous speaking, with full foot-noted outline in advance, two involving a specified kind of deliberative inference and one pointing out why the audience should or should not have confidence in the speaker or some other advocate.

A more substantial final speech, with outline, dealing with what has been decided upon as the principal clash of opinion.

A bibliography of materials in exact form.

19-25. Six to eight lectures on the analysis and criticism of current articles.

As each issue of *Harper's Magazine* (used last year) or the *Atlantic Monthly* (to be used this year) or whatever magazine we study appears, one, two, or three articles are assigned for reading and are then discussed in the lectures. As a rule we select articles on controversial issues.

The discussion meetings may take up other articles in the magazine, including fiction.

26-30. Four to six lectures for taking up whatever matters seem to need attention whenever the need arises.

The final examination covers the theory of the second half of the course, including analysis and criticism of a page or two of deliberative writing. Half the examination is an exercise in written composition.

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This detailed operation of the course is now in its second year. Most of the procedures had been worked out in previous years so that the only thing at all new last year was the co-ordination of the whole. We expect that we shall be continually modifying the general plan and the detail. This year we considered the possibility of a lecture on note taking and dropped it, perhaps ill-advisedly, when the students voted against it by a large majority.

Our greatest difficulty at the moment is with textbook materials, especially manuals and exercises. The available manuals on writing and on speechmaking seem to place great emphasis on the projection of the personality of the writer and speaker, on writing as fine expression and on speaking as an instrument of power, both ideas quite contrary to that which we have, whether rightly or wrongly, accepted as our guiding principle. The self-teaching exercises, the sort of thing we should like to use, are either gathered together in omnibus collections, most of which may be of no use to a student who has only one or two specific weaknesses, or, if they deal with one detail such as vocabulary, are much too elaborate. The general textbooks often run to administrative procedures not adaptable to any other syllabus than that for which they are designed; they are books which use the teacher, not books which a teacher can use. If we had good practical, in our special sense, textbooks, we could put the lecture time to better use than expounding theory or might reduce the number of lectures to one a week.

We are not convinced that we have solved the problem of unifying the course in communication or that our scheme should be widely adopted. We merely present the plan as one that seems to work tolerably well. We should be glad to have any critical comment, especially such as points out shortcomings which our perhaps affectionately myopic vision is incapable of detecting.

## Freshman Rhetoric at the University of Illinois

THE UNIVERSITY of Illinois has on its Champaign-Urbana campus the undergraduate colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Engineering, Agriculture, Commerce, Fine and Applied Arts, and Education, and the schools of Journalism and Physical Education. In normal times, about four thousand freshmen enroll in these various colleges every year and all are required to take either Freshman Rhetoric or Verbal Communication. Both courses are designed to meet the needs of students enrolled in any college on the campus. There is no segregation of the students in Engineering, Agriculture, or other colleges, with required composition courses adapted to their particular professional interests. The department of English at one time did earmark special sections in Freshman Rhetoric for Engineering students only, but the College of Engineering recommended abandonment of this arrangement on the grounds that its students did not need any special preparation not offered by the standard service course, but that they did need as much contact as possible with students and teachers in other colleges than Engineering.

The University of Illinois Freshman Rhetoric program has been developed in a particular place to serve particular needs. As a state institution, the university accepts high school graduates with varying degrees of preparation in English. It accepts, especially in its campus professional schools, many freshmen lacking ability and interest in the language arts. It has, however, resolved that all of its graduates must have an adequate mastery of English expression. The Freshman Rhetoric program represents only one segment of an all-university plan to achieve this objective.

During Freshman Week, prior to registration, all new freshmen take a two-hour rhetoric proficiency examination con-

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By Charles W. Roberts, professor of English and director of Freshman Rhetoric, University of Illinois.

sisting of an impromptu composition and a one-hundred-point objective test. Each examination is read by a committee of three rhetoric staff members who determine whether the writer should be denied admission to, admitted to, or granted exemption from Rhetoric 101, the standard first-semester course. In recent years about 20 percent of the new students are denied admission to Rhetoric 101, and about 4 percent are granted exemption from that course. Those denied admission to the course may enroll in Rhetoric 100, a noncredit, remedial course. Those granted exemption from Rhetoric 101 may enroll in Rhetoric 102, the second-semester course, and may, within the first week of school, take a proficiency test in an effort to gain exemption from that course.

The Freshman Rhetoric proficiency tests are designed to place each student in the level of work for which he is best adapted and in which he can best succeed. The exceptionally gifted student is excused from both semesters of Freshman Rhetoric and is granted six hours of credit toward graduation. The handicapped student, on the other hand, is required to take at least three semesters of Freshman Rhetoric. The granting of credit for passing a proficiency test is standard practice in most elementary courses at the University of Illinois.

The student who is not denied admission to or been granted exemption from Rhetoric 101 has two alternatives: he may enroll in Rhetoric 101, a fairly standard, three-hour course in composition, offered by the department of English; or in Verbal Communication, a four-hour listening-speaking-reading-writing course offered by the Division of General Studies. Both the English department and the Division of General Studies are in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, but they offer service courses for all colleges on the campus. Although the Verbal Communication course was originally designed and taught by members of the English department, it is now supervised and taught by members of the department of speech. The friendly rivalry between Freshman Rhetoric and Verbal Communication has been good for both courses. The reader will find the Verbal Communication program discussed elsewhere in this volume.

The University of Illinois Freshman Rhetoric program has been shaped over many years by many minds. The rhetoric staff is normally large, with seventy-one members this year,

many teaching only part time while they take graduate work. The annual staff turnover is large. Teachers completing work on advanced degrees at Illinois move on to other institutions and are replaced by younger persons, some from our own campus but most from other colleges. The staff is thus constantly renewed and refreshed, and ideas and practices prevailing in other institutions are introduced for our consideration and possible adoption. At the end of every school year, staff members reappraise our program and make suggestions for alteration. The annual reprinting of the *Manual and Calendar* incorporates the changes favored by a majority of the staff. Various experimental sections are set up from time to time to try out radically new procedures.

The *Manual and Calendar*, a ninety-six page booklet, has three major divisions: the manual of instructions or rules and regulations governing the three courses; the three calendars or schedules of daily assignments; and the reading list of books shelved in the freshman reading room in the University Library.

Each student is expected to have his own copy of the *Manual and Calendar* and to bring it to class regularly. In the manual section of the booklet he finds directions for preparing manuscript and for handling compositions. He also reads brief but pointed comments on honesty in written work, the value of grades, examinations, supplementary reading, conferences, and so on. At the beginning of each calendar, the student finds a form on which he can record grades and errors made on compositions, and another form on which he can list words which he has misspelled frequently.

In the course calendars, the three assignments for each week are printed on a single page, with each entry separated from the others by blank spaces in which the student can enter more specific directions given by his particular instructor. The student is warned that "all assignments here made are subject to change by individual instructors. You are advised to give careful attention to and make written note of assignment instructions given in the classroom."

#### RHETORIC 100

The Rhetoric 100 calendar is prefaced by this statement of the objectives of the noncredit, remedial course:

Rhetoric 100 is planned to prepare you for admission to Rhetoric 101. In it you will study assignments designed to give you a working knowledge



of grammar, correct sentence and paragraph construction, and punctuation. You will also be encouraged to enlarge your vocabulary and to improve your spelling. You will write many short compositions, which will be analyzed by your instructor and which you will revise and correct. You will analyze the writing of others and thereby develop powers of criticism and an awareness of standards which will help you improve your own writing.

You should bear in mind that Rhetoric 100 is not a required course. It is offered by the university to those willing to work to overcome their writing handicaps. By applying yourself you should be able to pass Rhetoric 100 and thus gain admission to Rhetoric 101. *If you are negligent in doing the assigned work, you will be dropped from the course and will thus lose the assistance the university has offered you.* Instead of gaining admission to Rhetoric 101 by passing Rhetoric 100, you may attempt to do so by passing a proficiency test offered at the beginning of the next semester. If, by the beginning of your *third semester*, you have not gained admission to Rhetoric 101, you will be obliged to withdraw from the university.

A committee of three rhetoric staff members will study your Rhetoric 100 final examination to determine whether you have developed the proficiency necessary for admission to Rhetoric 101. If the committee approves your admission, your instructor will then determine your semester grade on the basis of work done throughout the semester.

In the first three weeks of the term, the Rhetoric 100 assignments follow the Rhetoric 101 program. The first compositions are labeled Themes A, B, and C. On the basis of these papers the classification of all students in both Rhetoric 100 and Rhetoric 101 is reconsidered, and teachers may recommend the transfer of individual students from one course to the other. Recommendations are acted on by staff committees and some transfers are made. The three-week period of probation is a safeguard against mistakes in classification.

Beyond the third week, the Rhetoric 100 program becomes intensively remedial. The students use a handbook and an exercise workbook in reviewing fundamentals. They use also a comparatively simple and readable book of prose models. They write a short composition every week and are given a considerable amount of individual attention to enable them to overcome their handicaps. To permit this analysis and treatment of individual problems, the enrollment in Rhetoric 100 classes is kept down to fifteen.

Standards in Rhetoric 100 are simply those prevailing in the twelfth grade in reputable high schools. Even so, about 15 percent of the students fail the course. The 85 percent passing

are deemed ready to start a college-level course in composition with reasonable hope of passing if they continue to apply themselves. The college careers of students assigned to Rhetoric 100 are usually short, however, with only 18 per cent remaining for a third year. Their deficiency in English may handicap them in their other courses or may indicate general lack of ability to do college work. Rhetoric 100 is of considerable value in saving some students with poor preparation from almost certain failure in Rhetoric 101 and in giving even those who remain on the campus for a short time a thorough grounding in the common decencies of English expression.

### RHETORIC 101

The student enrolled in Rhetoric 101 is given the following statement regarding the objectives and plan of the course:

Rhetoric 101 is primarily concerned with the written and oral expression of ideas based on personal observation and experience. It is designed to develop in you the ability (1) to express easily, accurately, and effectively the ideas and problems that arise in your own experience, (2) to read with understanding and pleasure, (3) to listen to others and understand the purpose, direction, and detail of what they are saying, and (4) to speak effectively and without embarrassment. To achieve these objectives you will be asked to write an average of a theme a week and to read some of your compositions aloud to the class.

#### Weeks 1-3: Preparation

##### Review of fundamentals

Three themes. These are diagnostic. On the basis of your work on them you may be advised to withdraw from Rhetoric 101 and to enroll in Rhetoric 100.

#### Weeks 4-15: Observational exposition

##### Paragraphing.

Reading of models in exposition, with attention to means of making experiences and procedures clear and interesting.

Study and practice in outlining.

Vocabulary building.

Expository themes reporting experiences, processes, activities, etc. (One long composition.)

Oral or written appraisal of outside reading of three books.

Concurrent study of basic principles of correct composition, with particular attention to spelling, punctuation, agreement, and reference. This phase of the course may be expanded or reduced by individual instructors according to the needs of particular classes.

The texts used are a college handbook and a collection of simple, practical, timely expositions or articles. No attempt

is made to introduce the student to literary masterpieces. Rhetoric 101 remains primarily a skills course.

At the successful completion of Rhetoric 101 the student should be able to express himself clearly and correctly in writing and speaking. He may even be able to communicate ideas with some vigor and artistry.

### RHETORIC 102

The Rhetoric 102 objectives are thus stated in the *Manual and Calendar*:

Rhetoric 102, expecting a higher standard of achievement than that prevailing in Rhetoric 101, is primarily concerned with analytical and argumentative exposition. It is designed to perfect the abilities you developed in Rhetoric 101 and to develop in you the ability (1) to digest and evaluate the ideas of others, (2) to investigate and report the results of such investigation, (3) to test the arguments of others, and (4) to present your own arguments logically and persuasively.

In Rhetoric 102, you will do a considerable amount of reading and will, therefore, have further opportunity to enrich your mind and strengthen your vocabulary. Your understanding of assigned reading will be tested occasionally by short quizzes covering content and word meaning.

The texts used in Rhetoric 102 are a handbook and a book of readings illustrating the sound use of logic and source material.

Written work for the semester proceeds from a diagnostic test through essays of definition, analysis, criticism, and argument to two research papers with preliminary outlines. Oral work includes informal discussions of controversial issues, panel discussions, individual reports on outside reading and research projects, and frequent reading and discussion of written composition. Whereas the student completing Rhetoric 101 should be able to speak and write correctly and clearly, the student completing Rhetoric 102 should be able to *think* clearly and to arrive at sound judgments.

### EFFECTIVENESS

One indication of the effectiveness of the Freshman Rhetoric program may be found in later testing. A student who receives a semester grade of C or D in Rhetoric 102 (or its equivalent in some other institution) is required to take an English qualifying examination at the end of his sophomore year, and, if he fails the examination, to take Rhetoric 200, a remedial course for upperclassmen. A passing grade on the examination or in Rhetoric 200 is required for graduation.

We have found that 85 percent of the students obliged to take the English qualifying examination are able to pass it, and that the majority of those who fail and are required to take Rhetoric 200 are transfer students who did not take Freshman Rhetoric at the University of Illinois.

Another indication of the effectiveness of the Freshman Rhetoric program may be found in the calibre of work printed quarterly in the *Green Caldron, a Magazine of Freshman Writing*. This magazine is edited and published by the rhetoric staff to give recognition to able writers and to provide models of student writing for class analysis and discussion. The *Green Caldron* is now in its eighteenth year of continuous publication. Selections from its pages have been reprinted in a half-dozen textbooks of college composition.

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The Freshman Rhetoric program at the University of Illinois is a practical one designed to provide training in basic skills for students with diverse backgrounds and objectives in life. We have no mean opinion of its place in the curriculum. We believe that the student, gnawing his pencil as he tries to organize his thoughts on paper, is the *sine qua non* in the full development and intelligent utilization of our new gadgets of communication and, through them, the preservation of our civilization.

## The Freshman English Course at Florida State University

IN THE Freshman English course at Florida State University the student does three things intended to increase his facility with English as a tool for getting and giving ideas. He reviews certain facts about English and the way it is used. He gets practice in communicating ideas through English. He analyzes a number of samples of modern expository writing with a view to understanding fully and clearly what the writer means.

It is not a course in grammar. It is not a course in literature. It is a course in how to write effectively for the purposes of everyday life. The student's immediate writing needs may be limited to personal letters and papers for his various college courses. But as time goes on he will need to know how to write effective business letters and reports in connection with his business and professional activity. A little later he may find it necessary to prepare articles and speeches. Our course is designed to give him writing ability sufficient to enable him to make successful use of his other talents whatever his vocation may be.

But writing skill is only one side of the coin. The other side is reading skill. We try to encourage our students to read actively, not passively. Passive reading occurs when you start your eyes going word after word, sentence after sentence,

By James Paul Stoakes, associate professor of English, and chairman, Communication through Language, Florida State University.

<sup>1</sup>"Competence means such control and direction of expression as to insure successful communication. Decency means such a mastery of acceptable forms as not to offend the taste of cultivated people. Competence relates to the capacity of writing or speech to do its work. It has to do with the organization of ideas, with thinking in a straight line, with putting words together in sentences and paragraphs in such a way as to convey meaning easily and clearly. Decency may be regarded as the manners of discourse, and bears the same relation to speaking and writing that good table manners have to eating. The schoolboy who declares, 'We ain't goin' to have no baseball team this year' is using language with competence, for his meaning is perfectly clear, but he is not using it with decency." (Clarence D. Thorpe, "Language and Composition: A Suggestion for an Improved Program," *The University of Michigan School of Education Bulletin*, January 1935).

and then go off and leave them. When you get back you don't know what they've read. In active reading you stay on the job every minute. Like the busy one-man band, you do many things at the same time when you read actively. You check the meaning of new words, you watch the relation of subordinate ideas to the main ideas in the passage, you make your old ideas pay their respects to new ideas. But most of all when you finish you know exactly — not approximately — the main idea in what you've read. It's not easy. You can't read actively without being active. But it's worth it. Active reading is the best way the human race has ever found for getting the knowledge that keeps us human.

In our Freshman English course, then, we content ourselves with trying to give our students the kind of language skills we believe they will find most useful in their personal, business, and professional lives. Basically we want our students to write so they may be read and to read so they may be right. The precious two percent who come to us already masters of competent and decent expression will be exempted from the course. We shan't bore them, and they can go on to courses better adapted to meet them where they are and take them where they want to go. But the other ninety-eight percent — that vast majority who will never win fame for the way they say things but who will in many cases be helped toward substantial success if what they say can be competently and decently said and if what they read can be clearly and efficiently understood — them we can help.<sup>1</sup> For this ninety-eight percent we have formulated four modest objectives for our course, two concerned with writing and two with reading:

1. The development of acceptable standards of performance in such basic matters as punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure
2. The organization and presentation of complex discussion, including that based on systematic research
3. The interpretation and evaluation of moderately difficult reading
4. An awareness of language not only as a medium for the honest communication of ideas but also as a medium of propaganda designed to mislead and misinform.

## CONTENT

The quarter system, for all its disadvantages, has at least this advantage for us: it enables us to divide our Freshman English course into three parts, each with a different emphasis. During the first quarter we emphasize competence and decency of expression, in the second quarter the technique of library research and documentation, in the third quarter the logical analysis of language with a view to detecting implications and concealed assumptions. Each quarter's work is divided into five units of approximately six class meetings to the unit. The first-quarter units are devoted to discussing what is meant by good English, to sentences, mechanics and punctuation, paragraphs, and letter writing. The second-quarter units are concerned with outlining, choosing a research subject, using materials in the library, writing the research paper, and reading on a modern problem. The third-quarter units deal with the wider meaning of words, the wider meaning of statements (two units), writing to persuade, and freedom of the press.

Throughout our Freshman English course we are more concerned with "competence," somewhat as defined above by Professor Thorpe, than we are with "decency." Successful communication is what we are after. But we recognize — as of course Professor Thorpe does too — that successful communication involves more than making your meaning perfectly clear. The schoolboy who declares "We ain't goin' to have no baseball team this year" does indeed make his meaning perfectly clear. But his auditors may add to his meaning other meanings not his at all, meanings he didn't intend to communicate — inferences, for example, about his social background, his schooling, and possibly even about his morals. That is not successful communication, and if we arbitrarily call it "competent" though not "decent" we confuse the issue. It's not "competent" if it's not "decent." You can't have successful communication if the form of your expression offends the taste of your audience or conveys meanings not implicit in the content. So when I say that in our Freshman English course we are more concerned with "competence" than with "decency," I don't mean that we ignore the problem of "decency." I mean simply that we are more concerned "with the organization of ideas, with thinking in a straight line, with putting words together in sentences and paragraphs in such a way as to convey meaning easily and clearly" than we are with the

negative virtue of avoiding vulgarities. We regard "decency" as a part of "competence."

Students whose mastery of acceptable forms is so unsure as to make the achievement of "decency" a primary problem for them are assigned on the basis of placement tests to special sections for the first quarter. These special sections — involving about fifteen percent of our entering freshmen — meet for five hours a week instead of three. The additional time enables the instructor to devote more attention to the handbook than he would in the regular course. Upon successful completion of this course the student has earned three hours' credit and enters the regular second-quarter course.

In our first-quarter course, then, with the poorer students assigned to special sections, we concentrate on what may be regarded as the rhetorical problem rather than the grammatical. Not, What is the acceptable form? but rather, Which of the acceptable forms more successfully communicates the idea? is the question we ask. To aid us in attacking this problem specifically we use an exercise book that eschews the formal approach in favor of one compelling the student actually to manipulate language in such a way as to communicate ideas. For example, many of the exercises present statistical tables, graphs, or drawings which the student is required to interpret, first in single-sentence answers to specific questions, then in somewhat ampler discussion, and finally in carefully developed paragraphs. Such exercises have the advantage of enabling the instructor to grade the student's writing purely in terms of its success in communicating a previously defined idea. They have the further advantage of encouraging the student to use graphic devices in his own writing, devices that are of ever-growing importance in modern communication but which are all too often neglected entirely in college communication courses. To improve the student's skill in reading and to provide him with examples of established writers solving problems in communication we use a book of expository essays, each of which is accompanied by exercise sheets directing the student's attention to the ideas expressed, to the way in which they are expressed, and to significant aspects of the vocabulary. Besides the writing involved in studying these two textbooks, the student writes five original themes for a total of about two thousand words. A handbook of usage and a dictionary are, of course, also required texts, but except in the special



sections for poorer students they are used chiefly as reference volumes.

In the second quarter the student is taught to dig below and to build above the specific idea to be expressed. He is taught to dig below the idea in the sense that he is encouraged to examine its factual foundations to see whether it is firmly enough based to be acceptable in a thought structure. He is taught to build above it in the sense that he is encouraged to see the idea as one unit along with other similar units in a thought structure designed to serve a particular end. He is concerned, in other words, with research and with organization. Research, for the limited purposes of the course, means primarily learning how to dig information out of the library and presenting it with adequate documentation. Organization means learning how to put the information together into a logical pattern, a pattern that can be guided and checked by a formal outline.

The research or term-paper program in a Freshman English course frequently runs into an almost solid wall of student resistance, but we have found three devices of considerable use in reducing that wall to little more than an optical illusion. First, the student must work on a subject that really interests him. Of most general appeal are subjects involving the student's own future. What is the legal profession really like? Is a college education essential for success as a department store buyer? Are tourist camps tending to displace hotels? What progress has the Florida school system made in the last ten years? Second, the student should choose a subject that will enable him to make some use of primary sources, such as personal interviews, as well as library resources. All of the foregoing subjects are of that kind. The would-be lawyer who wondered whether he would really like law not only delved into books on choosing a career, law journals, and autobiographies of famous lawyers, but also interviewed three local attorneys. The investigation helped him reach a decision and gave him valuable suggestions as to courses of study and choice of law schools. Incidentally, he turned in an excellent paper. A third device we have found useful in motivating a student's work on his research problem is to explain more fully than is sometimes done the reason for careful documentation. We ask the student to write as if he had to convince a hostile or at least an indifferent reader of the

soundness of the conclusions he reaches in the paper. Such a reader will be apt to question every significant fact or assertion. It's the student's job to provide in his footnotes such authoritative references for the evidence he presents that it cannot be gainsaid. Effective marshalling of the evidence will do the rest. This device has the virtue of encouraging the student to take a clearly defined stand on the issue he discusses and tends to eliminate the "research" paper that is little more than a report based on a dozen sources instead of one.

In our third-quarter course we introduce the student to elementary semantics. We discuss more fully than we do in earlier quarters the connotative as distinguished from the denotative aspects of words and the unexpressed assumptions lurking behind many kinds of generalizations. We concern ourselves with "referents," the "abstraction ladder," and the forms of syllogistic reasoning. A typical example of the kind of statement students are asked to analyze is the following, which appeared in various full-page advertisements during 1948:<sup>2</sup>

Most Americans say they think 10 to 15 cents out of each dollar of sales would be a fair profit for business to make. Government figures show that industry averages less than half that much profit!

This statement is a skillful bit of mumbo-jumbo. No one can escape its intent. Its intent is to lead us to formulate for ourselves the conclusion that business (or industry) profits are moderate; the conclusion itself — a sort of self-expanding variety — almost irresistibly suggests that profits ought to be bigger. It seems to be supported by the opinion of "most Americans" (band wagon) and "government figures" (card stacking).

Let's see whether the conclusion so powerfully suggested is supported by the statements made. Reducing them to syllogistic form we get something like this:

*Major premise:* Ten to fifteen cents out of each dollar of sales would be a fair profit for business to make.

*Minor premise:* Industry averages less than half of ten to fifteen cents out of each dollar of sales.

*Conclusion:* (Business — or industry — averages less than a fair profit.)

<sup>2</sup>*Time*, January 19, 1948, p. 103; *Time*, September 13, 1948, p. 120. See also *Time*, February 9, 1948, p. 1, and *Time*, December 13, 1948, p. 1, where the first sentence emerges as "An impartial national survey shows that most Americans consider 10½-15% on sales a fair profit for business."

It's a false syllogism, destroyed by the sliding panel terms, "business" and "industry." The two premises do not talk about the same thing, and we can draw no conclusion from them. The fact that we do, however, draw a conclusion, that we are obviously intended to draw a conclusion, is where the mumbo-jumbo comes in.<sup>3</sup>

But if the statement as a whole, taken broadly and at its face value, is unsound, it is even more unsound when we look for the referents behind its basic terms. What, for example, is meant by "dollar of sales," by "profit," and by "business"? Is "business" the same as "industry"? Going a step further, what is meant by "most Americans" and by "government figures"? What, to go still further, is the meaning of "say they think"?

To illustrate: Does "10 to 15 cents out of each dollar of sales" refer to sales at the retail level alone? What then becomes of the profits of those standing behind the retailer — the producer, processor, manufacturer, wholesaler, and so on? Even unprocessed consumer items will normally be sold at least twice before the third sale to the ultimate consumer. A farmer, for example, may sell his eggs to a distributor who may then sell them to the local grocery. Should each of these sellers make ten percent profit? Is that what "most Americans" say they think? Or do they say they think that the total profits of all the sellers should amount to at least ten percent?

Analyses of this kind can do wonders in making the student aware as nothing else can of the symbolic nature of language. He learns to penetrate the symbols, to search for the reality behind them. Thoroughly drilled in the technique, the alert student will never again read or write in quite the same old way. His writing will take on a conscious precision and coordination. His reading will become what it ought to be — a search for meaning. Too long have we in our composition courses limited ourselves to the study of language as a device for honest communication; our books of readings have provided examples of writers saying important things nobly and well. But language can camouflage as well as reveal, and if

<sup>3</sup>The shift from "business" to "industry" may, of course, be deliberate. In that event the implied conclusion may be that (a) industry gets less than its fair share of business profits or that (b) industry is less profitable per dollar of sales than other forms of business. This doesn't seem to make much sense either. The astonishment expressed in the original statement's exclamation point is echoed by at least one reader.

we do not teach our students that and teach them how to tell the difference, we are not preparing them to assume the risks that accompany the responsibilities guaranteed by the First Amendment.

#### THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Communication through Language is one of the five major areas in the general education program at Florida State University. The other areas are health and personal adjustment, social thought and institutions, humanities, and natural sciences. Fifteen quarter hours' credit is the normal requirement in Communication through Language, at least nine of which must be earned in Freshman English. The rest of the requirement may be met by offering credit in speech or in foreign language.

We use three devices to adapt our English program to the differing needs of our students. First, a placement test (reading comprehension, mechanics, usage) segregates those who need elementary review. They go into special sections, meeting five times a week for three hours' credit. Success in the course entitles the student to enter the regular second-quarter course. Second, students may gain exemption from part or all of Freshman English by passing certain tests. In September 1948 about ten percent of our students won exemption from the first quarter's course; of these about fifteen percent went on to get exemption from the second quarter's course; and of this group, in turn, about five percent got exemption from the third quarter's course. Except in the first quarter exemption tests are voluntary; probably only the more confident students present themselves. The third device we use to adapt our program to student needs is a junior level English examination. Students who make a poor showing on this test must do special work carrying no credit in our Writing Clinic. They must pass the junior-level composition examination before being allowed to graduate. Furthermore, faculty members in all departments are encouraged to refer advanced students at any time to the Writing Clinic.

To coordinate our Freshman English program we have developed a Freshman English Syllabus. This 150-page booklet, printed, sold to students at cost, is much more than an assignment syllabus. It contains a great deal of background information designed to orient the student. Among its outstanding

features, aside from the course outlines, are a checklist for themes, data about the library (including floor plans), and a dozen freshman themes representing all levels of proficiency, each accompanied by a detailed analysis.<sup>4</sup>

The Freshman English program described above is the one we have now. It differs considerably from the program we had two years ago; it probably differs considerably from the one we shall have in 1951. But at the moment it represents the best solution we have been able to find to the problem of teaching our students to put meaning into their writing and to get meaning out of their reading.

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<sup>4</sup>Copies of the *Syllabus*, without charge, are available for the asking. Write to Dr. J. P. Soskol, Florida State University, Tallahassee.

## Purdue University's Program in Communications

**A**LTHOUGH NOT labeled Communications, Purdue University's required courses in English and speech have objectives similar to those of the conventional communications program. The Purdue program stresses writing and speaking, with reading and listening as corollaries; it follows tradition in having writing taught for two semesters, reading for one, and speaking for one — usually with different instructors, at least for the written and oral work. Recently, because of the increase to well over one hundred members of the staffs teaching writing, literature, and speaking, there were created separate departments of English and of speech. The manifold and complex problems within each area, before and since the division, have more than justified the separation; each department believes that it can do its own tasks best, and the relationships between the two are friendly and cooperative. No immediate change, therefore, is contemplated in the Purdue program, at least until experience and objective evidence elsewhere show that more permanent and effective results are obtained from having the four divisions of communications fused in one year's work, with the same instructors in sole charge of the various phases.

Unfortunately for explanatory purposes, the Purdue requirements looking toward the achievement of objectives in communication are not university-wide, but vary according to the different schools, some of which believe that courses in writing, or speaking, or reading have less practical value than other more purely vocational courses. In the School of Pharmacy and in the School of Agriculture, students do not take a required course in literature (reading), and such training is ancillary in the course in writing. In the School of Home Economics, only the weaker students have a second course in writ-

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ing. In the School of Science, students may substitute a course in speaking for a course in literature (reading). But in the Schools of Engineering, in which the largest proportion of students are enrolled, all four divisions of communication are required.

In general, the plan of this required work is as follows:

First year, first semester — freshman composition (writing)

First year, second semester — literature (reading) or speaking

Second year, first semester — speaking or literature (reading)

Second year, second semester (usually, but taken anywhere from the second semester of the freshman year through the second semester of the senior year) — expository writing

Last two years — a check on written work through a Committee on Standards in English, with limited or extensive remedial work required

The extent of the training, in writing at least, is dependent upon the student's achievement, and therefore, in the survey that follows, the Purdue system of grades should be kept in mind: 6, excellent; 5, very good; 4, average or above average; 3, minimum passing; 2, conditioned (credit withheld until certain minimum essentials are met); 1, failing, necessitating repetition of the course.

### WRITING

The major emphasis in the required work is on writing. Every student must take one such course; weaker students must take two; and very weak students usually take three. These requirements are usually fulfilled during the student's first two years. During his last two years, constant check is maintained, through sampling of his written work for non-English courses, on his writing, and when there is lapse from fairly decent standards of expression, remedial work is required.

The central course in writing is Freshman Composition, taken by every entering student. But depending upon his intelligence and background training, he may be assigned to a sub-freshman course (English A), an advanced course (English 32), or the so-called regular course (English 1). Each of these is one semester in length, and the student is enrolled in one of them immediately upon beginning his first semester's university work.

*Orientation procedure*

Such assignment is determined upon during the orientation period preceding the opening of the semester. Formerly, all students began their work in composition in the same course, and after a series of written papers and various tests were assigned to one of the groups—lower, middle, and upper. The task of division usually consumed three or four weeks, with heavy drain on the energies of the English staff, with considerable confusion also in the shifting of schedules within the department and in the making of transfers in the registrar's office (about 45 percent of the freshman class were so involved); by the time the transfers and confusion were settled and the new classes really under way, little more than half the semester remained for instruction. Under a system inaugurated some years ago, divisions of students are now made by the time of first-semester registration, and the three groups of freshman composition classes begin their semester's work with the first class meeting.

As already indicated, the orientation period provides evidence upon which freshman-class divisions are made. On the first day of orientation all entering students take a placement test in intelligence (one of the psychology test-forms prepared by the American Council on Education, now the Cooperative Testing Service) and a placement test in English. The latter is the Purdue Placement Test in English (three forms available) prepared by members of the Purdue department of English and quite well fulfilling its purpose of separating the stronger and weaker students from the middle group on the basis of their background training in writing. On this same day of orientation, all entering students also write a 45-minute paper on a subject chosen from an assigned list. While the staff of the division of educational reference is scoring the objective tests and preparing the percentiles, the staff of the department of English is grading the written papers. The two percentile marks and the theme grade determine the student's assignment. If the two percentile marks average 15 or lower, or if they average between 15 and 30 and the theme has a failing grade, the student is assigned to English A. If the two percentile marks average 90 or better, or if they average 65 or higher and the theme has a grade of 4 or better, the student is assigned to English 32. In general, all other students whose percentile marks and theme grades vary from the foregoing are assigned



to English 1. The registrar's office receives the assignment lists in ample time to make changes on the student's assignment card before the process of registration for classes begins. Occasional mistakes in divisioning are made, and therefore, on the basis of his work in class during the first four weeks, a student may be moved up from English A to English 1 or from English 1 to English 32; or he may be moved down from English 32 to English 1 or from English 1 to English A.

### *English A*

Between 15 and 20 percent of the freshman class are assigned to English A, a noncredit course designed to overcome, in part, background deficiencies in writing. The course has three class meetings a week. Its assignments consist of a review of grammar (repeated stress on words as parts of speech, on phrases, on clauses, on sentences), the most common principles of punctuation, and methods of correct spelling. Tests are given in grammar, punctuation, and spelling. More important, however, is a written assignment each week — a short paper or theme (half these assignments are written in class; half are prepared outside class) read for errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Fifteen papers (totaling approximately 4,000 words) are required during the course; standards for their grading as well as for other assignments are lower than for other composition courses. Most students benefit by English A. A very few hopeless ones may be required to repeat it, but most, whether passing or failing conditionally, are allowed to try English 1 the following semester. Usually about 50 percent of the ex-English A students pass the regular course, English 1. Though the course is noncredit, there is an incentive for achievement: the department realizes that some students will work hard or will belatedly show progress justifying transfer to English 1 when it is too late to make such transfer (after the fourth week), and it therefore permits credit in English 1 for students who make higher than the minimum passing grade in English A.

### *English 32 (advanced freshman composition)*

Between 25 and 30 percent of the freshman class are assigned to English 32 (one semester, three hours a week), a course permitting considerable variety in writing and reading assignments. It assumes that students are able to spell reasonably correctly; that they have adequate knowledge of grammatical

terms, usage, and the rules of punctuation; that they can write complete, clear, and correct sentences; and that they can construct properly unified paragraphs. Because of this assumption, themes in English 32 are graded with greater strictness than themes in English 1 when they show serious weaknesses in spelling, sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, or diction. Formal instruction in these matters is confined to referring the student to a handbook of writing for aid in eliminating his weaknesses. Other formal instruction deals with effectiveness in writing — in word-choice, sentences, paragraphs, organization, and with attempts to develop a style.

Subject matter of the written work varies considerably, dependent upon interests and needs of a particular class. The minimum writing requirement for the semester is 9,000 words, in themes or papers from 500 to 1,000 words in length. Limited library-training is also given — in using the card catalogue, finding books and magazines, using the various indexes to such materials; and this training is applied in reading and effective note-taking for, and in writing a well-organized research paper of at least 1,000 words, with material gathered from several sources. Training is also given in the principal types of business letter writing, with stress on correct and conventional form, the letter of inquiry, the letter of information, the application letter, and the complaint letter — that is, letters that an average professional person will some day write.

There is considerable incentive for a student's being assigned to and passing English 32. Students who make at least a minimum passing grade are given credit for one course in composition (but because of weaknesses shown must take another course in composition, either English 1 or business correspondence or report writing). Students who make a higher than minimum passing grade are given six hours of credit in English, and they take no other required courses in writing.

### *English 1*

English 1 is the regular freshman composition course (three class meetings a week for one semester). It enrolls between 50 and 60 percent of the freshmen, and includes second-semester students who have had English A or who have been weak in English 32.

The objectives of the course are clearness and correctness in writing, toward which all instruction is aimed. Early assign-

ments deal with choosing and limiting subjects, analyzing, gathering material, and organizing, followed by a brief review of the principles and methods of writing paragraphs. The remaining part of the semester is spent in a review of grammar (five weeks), punctuation (two weeks), spelling (two weeks), and diction (two weeks). Throughout this review, attention is constantly called to sentence clearness and correctness. Primarily to encourage careful preparation of assignments, there are 50-minute tests in grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Half the grammar test consists of identification and function of usable grammatical terms; 20 percent is on correct usage (sentences containing errors to be corrected); and 30 percent consists of writing sentences illustrating various grammatical terms. The punctuation test contains thirty-three sentences: the student is to insert the necessary punctuation marks according to conventional rules, and to give reason for the marks used. The spelling test is merely a dictated list, of from 50 to 100 words, chosen from the handbook list. Passing marks for the three tests are, respectively, 70, 75, and 90. It is believed that the knowledge obtained by the student in preparing for these tests is useful to him in his writing, but unless the test grades are either extremely high or extremely low, they do not much affect the student's final course grade, which is primarily determined by the quality of his written work.

This written work totals 5,500 to 6,000 words, half of it as class themes as long as the student can do reasonably well in fifty minutes, and half as outside papers from 350 to 600 words long. The number of papers written is sixteen. Subjects are usually assigned, although some are general enough to need limitation. Students are asked to write for and to indicate a special reader or readers, and themes are judged in part on their appropriateness and adaptation. Students are also asked to prepare for each paper a brief written outline, and then to expand each of the main topics or more important subtopics into a paragraph. The instructor reads and judges the paper for its limitation of subject, appropriateness, organization and paragraphing, and relative freedom from or inclusion of errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Wherever possible, for each error marked the instructor gives a reference to the handbook, and it is the student's responsibility to improve his written work through this guide. With every graded paper the instructor also requires a "correction sheet"—usually in the form of a page

on which are the symbols and handbook-page references in the left margin, a copying from the theme of the incorrect materials in the left column, and a correcting of these materials in the right column. These correction sheets are checked by the instructor and returned to the student to aid him in future papers (his graded themes are filed in the instructor's office, for use in conferences).

The student's semester grade in English 1 depends upon his improvement: the first six or eight themes show what his errors are and how they may be eliminated; no matter how low the grades may be on these early themes, if the student strikes a higher level and maintains it during the last half of the course, and especially on the last five themes written in class, his semester grade is determined by this second-half achievement.

There are incentives also for doing well in English 1. A student who receives either of the two highest grades (6 or 5) and who receives 4 or better in two subsequent courses in literature (reading) or speaking is not required to take the second course in composition, English 31, but substitutes an advanced course (business correspondence, report writing, journalism). Also, a grade of 4 in English 1 is sufficient for students in the School of Home Economics and in the School of Pharmacy to escape the requirement of any further writing course.

*English 31 (expository writing)*

English 31 is designed for students who have not received either of the two highest grades in English 1 and for transfer students needing an additional course in writing. It is a three-hour one-semester course usually given two or more semesters after English 1, in order to permit the student time to absorb the principles of writing acquired during first-semester freshman English and to re-emphasize principles of writing for the student as he enters his last years of college work when there is no universally required composition work.

Since it enrolls students who were none too strong in their English 1 writing, English 31 reviews also needed principles of grammar, spelling, and punctuation. In addition to the objectives of correctness and clearness, a further objective is effectiveness, with considerable attention paid to sentence structure. In the one test of the course, on the principles of sentence structure, the student is asked to revise twenty or thirty faulty sentences and to state the principle application to the revision of each.

The writing requirement is 8,000 words in a minimum of twelve assignments. There are three or four class themes of about 400 words each, and seven or eight outside themes of 600 or 800 words each. Like English 32, it requires a research paper of 1,200 words or more, with a background of library work and note-taking; like English 32, it also requires some writing of the more commonly used types of business letters. Unlike other courses in composition, however, English 31 is built around expository writing, the theme assignments including a process or a procedure, definition, analysis-classification, analysis-partition, and narrative exposition. Such theme assignments are correlated with assignments in an exposition textbook. Standards of theme-grading are those of English 1, as are the requirements for making out "correction sheets." When the student has successfully completed English 31, he has completed his required courses in writing — but samples of his written work in other courses during his last university years are read for possible lapses in proficiency.

#### *Other writing*

In courses in speaking and reading, a certain amount of writing is required. In his course in speaking, the student makes out various outlines which are graded primarily for logical organization. In his course or courses in literature (reading), he writes a minimum of 2,000 words, either in one long paper or a series of shorter papers. Subject matter is related to the content of the course; grading standards for the writing are those of the English 1 course.

Certain advanced courses in writing are required of upper-class students in some of the options within certain schools (for example, School of Home Economics students in the institutional management option and School of Aeronautics students in the air transportation option must take a course in business correspondence), but most of these courses are elective. Of considerable popularity are the courses in business correspondence and in engineering report writing; others attracting a fair share of upperclass students are courses in newspaper writing, magazine - article writing, agricultural writing, short - story writing, trade and technical journalism, and directed writing and editing.

#### *Follow-up work*

During his last two years of college, each student is required to maintain satisfactory proficiency in writing. Supervision

of this work is done by a Committee on Standards in English, consisting of members from the various schools of the university, its secretary a member of the department of English, its chairman a member of a department other than English. The task of the members of the committee is to see that several samples of written work of every junior and senior (examinations, term papers, engineering reports, and so on) are submitted for reading by a staff of four members of the department of English devoting half-time to this work.

Papers thus read are stamped "Satisfactory," "Doubtful," or "Unsatisfactory." If it is the second or third label, the writer is called to the committee's office to write a 300-word paper, in which he shows whether his substandard writing was due to indifference, lack of ability, or necessary haste. If the fault is lack of ability, the student is assigned to English X, a noncredit course, the aims, content, and method of which are described by the committee in a statement given to all students enrolled:

English X is an informal refresher course for upperclassmen who, in the judgment of the English Committee, do not write with reasonable correctness. A student assigned to the course is asked to choose an hour when he can appear each week for the writing of a 300-word paper. This hour should be between 3:00 and 5:00 p.m., but other hours can be arranged if the afternoon hours are not suitable.

The chief aim of English X is correctness in writing. Papers are considered satisfactory when they say what the writers have to say and are free of important errors in such fundamentals as spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, and use of pronouns. Subjects are provided by the committee, but students are encouraged to write on the material they know best and to think over their papers beforehand.

Dismissal from the course depends entirely on student performance. Some students need only to regain their old writing form and are dismissed after writing four good papers. Other students need more practice and experience, and a few are kept through more than one semester.

The committee does not regard assignment to English X as a penalty or cause for alarm. It believes, rather, that the writing practice is needed and is helpful, and in this belief is supported by a great majority of the students who have had the practice.

A production of three papers a month must be maintained.

The Committee on Standards in English has power to carry out its decisions. Most students are willing to cooperate, realizing their need and the value of the work. Recalcitrant students are brought before the proper administrative authorities and informed of the necessity of meeting the committee's re-

quirements. There has even been an occasional senior whose written work did not meet the committee's standards and who was prevented from graduating until his writing was considered satisfactory.

### READING

Purdue University has no formal instruction in the techniques of reading, that is, no exercises in timed reading selections, no teaching of or tests in speed and comprehension. There is indeed need for a reading clinic whose staff would deal with such matters as well as with problems of reading disabilities. At present, an occasional student is referred to some member of the department of psychology.

Otherwise, the reading part of the Purdue communications program is twofold: (1) reading as an auxiliary in courses in writing, and (2) reading (as literature), given in a one-semester three-hour course required of nearly every student during his first two years.

#### *Auxiliary reading*

Except for English A, each required course in composition (English 1, 32, and 31) as well as some of the elective writing courses uses a book of readings as an integral part of the work. Reading assignments are made on the average of once a week. In addition to varying the monotony of assignments in the theory of writing, this reading has for the student the following objectives: (A) to understand a little of the author's life and his background; (B) to determine the group of readers written for, and the appropriateness of the subject matter and expression; (C) to decide upon the purpose of the particular assignment and to state the general overall theme; (D) to understand through outlining the plan of organization; main divisions and supporting material; (E) to study paragraphing (length, topic sentence, methods of development, transitions); (F) to provide specific words for increase of vocabulary; (G) to provide illustrations of the principles of writing currently being studied: grammar, punctuation, spelling, diction, sentence structure, sentence variety; (H) to provide problems for discussion (later usable as theme subjects) and models of various types of writing for study and imitation.

In addition, two writing courses have required outside-reading assignments. In English 1, students read one book of fiction and one of nonfiction (biography or autobiography).

In English 32, students read four books outside class, chosen from an extensive list of novels and collections of short stories. Written papers on these books range from fairly elaborate book reports (author's purpose, means of accomplishing purpose, detailed analysis) to short themes discussing some particular problem or situation or character.

### *Reading as literature*

With few exceptions nearly every student is required to take a one-semester course in literature during his first two years. Students in agriculture do not meet this requirement, and students in pharmacy are allowed to choose either such a course or the second course in writing (English 31). There are eight courses in literature, usually labeled "Introduction to . . ." and, barring the limitations imposed by specific schools, the student chooses any one, depending upon his interests. In summary form, these courses are as follows:

English 3 — Introduction to Modern Literature: seven contemporary plays; a volume of short stories; poetry selections; one novel.

English 4 — Great American Books: one masterpiece by Hawthorne, Thoreau, Whitman, Wolfe, Melville, Twain, and Poe's short stories.

English 5 — A Survey of English Literature: from Beowulf to Thomas Gray.

English 6 — A Survey of English Literature: from Thomas Gray to Thomas Hardy. (A survey of American Literature, in two semesters, is offered as an elective for juniors and seniors.)

English 10 — Readings in the Old and New Informal Essay — a survey of the history and development of the familiar essay in English.

English 19 — Introduction to the Drama: three Shakespeare plays and about twenty plays since 1900, American, British, and Continental.

English 20 — Introduction to Poetry: assignments in British and American poets for students not specializing in literature, but interested in reading poetry.

English 27 — Introduction to Fiction: two volumes of short stories (totaling 40) and seven novels, including one each by Emily Bronte, Dostoevsky, Sinclair Lewis, E. M. Forster, W. Somerset Maugham, Ignazio Silone, and John Steinbeck.



Assignments in the foregoing courses vary, and different authors and books are constantly being substituted to improve effectiveness. Methods in these courses also vary. By way of example, the objectives of two courses are thus summarized:

English 6: (1) ability to give the main facts of the life and work of the chief writers; (2) ability to place any writer taken up in the course in the part of the century and literary or historical period in which he belongs; (3) ability to give the titles and main points of the subject matter of representative productions of any writer assigned, and the distinguishing characteristics of his work; (4) ability to recognize and define simpler metrical elements, chief stanzaic forms, and principal literary types.

English 27: The student must read the short stories and novels as they are assigned and be prepared to write of them specifically and generally in daily quizzes and hour tests. He must (A) know the characteristics as novelists of the major authors studied, (B) show some ability to understand abstract ideas and to appraise these ideas, and (C) understand the technique of literary criticism sufficiently to enable him to discuss intelligently the structure, type, and thought of the stories and novels read.

### SPEAKING AND LISTENING

One course in speaking, with three weekly meetings for one semester, is required of students in virtually all schools of the university, except the School of Science, where it is encouraged as an elective in place of a course in literature (reading). The almost universally assigned course is Speech 14. Labeled "The Principles of Speech," it has, as general objectives, effective methods of speaking and proper preparation of the content of speeches.

Classes are limited to twenty-five students, each of whom takes his turn serving as chairman of the meeting and each of whom gives a total of nine speeches and participates in additional oral exercises. The general content of these speeches is as follows: an explanation and demonstration of a simple operation; a personal experience or event that had plenty of action; an attack on or defense of some situation or practice — a "get it off your chest" speech; a speech making one specific point stressing pertinence and adequacy of detail; a "one point speech" developing a motive appeal; a speech designed to actu-

ate; a speech to convince that a situation needs changing; a practical project for a group having power to act; a speech of instruction on how to perform an important task. These various speeches are in length from two or three minutes to seven minutes.

In the preparation of speeches and in their delivery, the student is aware of a minimum set of conditions which he must meet: (A) speak directly to his audience; (B) show enthusiasm; (C) have a good posture and use effective bodily action and gesture; (D) develop a distinct and forceful speaking voice; (E) use ample support for the main points of his speeches; (F) use graphic material where needed in his speeches; (G) organize his speeches clearly; (H) show evidence of serious thought in preparation; (I) prepare and hand in an outline of each speech (these outlines as well as other written materials are read carefully for the quality of their writing).

A parallel course, Speech 16, Fundamentals of Expression, is required of students in the School of Home Economics and of those expecting to obtain a teacher's license in English; it is also frequently elected by students in the School of Science and by students planning to do any kind of secondary school teaching. Some of the subjects for speeches — especially the "how to inform" type — are similar to those in Speech 14, but greater emphasis is placed on adapting materials for a specific audience (school pupils), on reading poetry and prose aloud, on using graphic materials, and on conducting group discussions. Seven speeches are required from each student, as well as participation in other forms of oral activity.

Not required but exceedingly popular as electives among upperclass students are two courses built on the foundations of Speech 14 or 16. One course, Speech 116, The Business and Professional Interview, covers the study of and practice in the application of methods and techniques used in conducting more effective business interviews; a series of practice conferences is conducted in class in order to integrate the theory of persuasion with the practical problems of the interview. The other course, Speech 140, Forms of Occasional Speech, requires fourteen reasonably effective speeches and has for its purpose: to acquaint the student with the requirements of speech-making situations and the methods of building speeches adapted to those occasions; to develop a marked degree of personal

skill in each individual student; and to develop clearness and fluency of language.

Training in listening is more or less supplementary. On the formal side, it consists of student criticism, by means of speech-rating charts, of the various speeches given in class, and of assigned reports on speeches (beyond the classroom) by faculty members or by visiting campus lecturers.

#### METHODS OF EVALUATION

Since there are no final examinations at Purdue University, evaluation of student achievement depends upon the following: in writing, upon the papers written inside and outside class and upon tests over subject matter; in reading, upon classroom discussion, assigned papers, and tests; and in speaking, upon tests, written outlines, and, most important naturally, the speeches given in the classroom.

## The Comprehensive Freshman English Course at the University of Florida

IN 1935 the University of Florida began a new plan of general education. The freshman and sophomore years were organized as the General College (now called the University College), and two years of general or liberal education became required of all students. This program of general education is presented through seven comprehensive courses designed to cover the major fields of knowledge: American Institutions; The Physical Sciences; Reading, Speaking, and Writing; Practical Logic; Fundamental Mathematics; The Humanities; The Biological Sciences. All of them are two-semester courses except those dealing with logic and mathematics, which require one semester. Reading, Speaking, and Writing, together with American Institutions and The Humanities, is required of all students, while in the case of the other four courses, students with high achievement scores may substitute in the area the introductory course required in their chosen field of specialization. In any event, every registrant studies in the various areas, since the program is based on the assumption that every citizen should have a broad educational foundation.

The comprehensive freshman English course, Reading, Speaking, and Writing, is, then, one part of the university's program of general education. The course, planned to help college students improve their reading and writing, listening and speaking, attempts to synchronize these language arts, using reading as a core. It is based on the following assumptions: (1) Every use of language involves, broadly speaking, a social situation; (2) ideas are of prime importance, and teaching the communication skills is fruitless when attempted apart from ideas meaningful to the student; (3) language skills,

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like other skills, must be improved by regular practice; (4) the communication skills are so closely interrelated that progress in one makes progress in each of the others surer and easier — in fact, that they operate in a complementary manner; (5) the most effective approach in the development of the communication skills is through reading.

The course requires four<sup>1</sup> class hours a week for two semesters: one in lecture, two in discussion, and one (formerly two) in writing. The general aims of the course are to engender in the student the ability (1) to get the meaning from the printed page with a more than average rate of speed, (2) to read good writing with increased enjoyment, (3) to follow the spoken word and record main ideas accurately, and (4) to communicate ideas effectively in both oral and written discourse. The student's achievement of these aims is evidenced by his ability (1) to analyze another's writing, discovering the writer's central purpose and his pattern of thinking, (2) to use in their exact meaning a wide range of words, (3) to condense another's thought as in precis, abstract, or summary, (4) to read with enjoyment good writing as expressed in various literary forms, (5) to exhibit an increased interest in the voluntary reading of books which have been accepted as desirable, (6) to speak with clearness, accuracy, and sincerity, exhibiting poise and confidence, (7) to gather thought material, arrange it in an appropriate form, and finally present it in effectively written discourse. Since a major purpose of the course is to engender certain abilities, mere rote learning of the texts used is not the primary goal. Books and other materials are used to furnish ideas and to provide the student with exercises, the proper carrying out of which will aid him in achieving the abilities sought.

#### COURSE PROCEDURE

The work of the course falls into three types of class procedure. Once each week the student attends a lecture presented to the freshman group in three large sections. The purposes of the lectures are (1) to give the student information useful in improving his language skills, (2) to present some phase of a challenging question, and (3) to afford the student opportunity for active listening and for practice in recording

<sup>1</sup>Prior to the greatly increased enrollment following the recent war, five hours were required. It is planned to return to the former schedule in the fall of 1950.

accurately what he hears. The lectures, attended by the members of the staff as well as by the students, serve as a unifying factor and provide a measure of inservice training for the staff, particularly in the areas of speech and reading. About half the lectures are on how to improve one's ability to read, speak, or write. Such topics as "Problems of Reading," "How to Improve One's Reading Comprehension and Rate," "Some Common Hindrances to Effective Speaking," "Effective Use of Bodily Activity in Speaking," "Choosing and Limiting Theme Subjects," and "The Composition as a Whole" are presented. Others, as "The Meaning of Education," "The American Tradition," "Why Literature?" "How to Read a Drama," and "The Realm of Poetry," round out the total of thirty. At the lectures, the student takes notes indicating the course of thought followed and questions raised in his mind. Examination of the student's lecture notes (a page is provided in the course syllabus for notes on each lecture) and brief written tests on the lectures are means to determine how well the student is mastering the ability to follow the spoken work and record the thoughts in proper relationship. The content of the lecture is also included in the progress tests and comprehensive examinations. Some special features of the lectures are the showing of films, the use of recordings, and the presentation of effective freshman speakers chosen from the entire course enrollment.

Following the weekly lecture, the student attends a discussion group twice each week. At these meetings there is a discussion of the preceding lecture and of the textual materials, which are generally related to the subject discussed by the lecturer. The purpose of the discussion classes is to help the student retrace the speaker's and the writer's pattern of thinking. Every effort is made to have the student read with a purpose. To do this certain techniques are employed. In order to provide suitable materials accompanied by the necessary approach, it proved desirable to prepare our own text, which is now in its third edition.<sup>2</sup> After reading each essay, the student checks his understanding by determining which of five given statements most nearly expresses the *central idea* of the essay and whether the remaining four are *incorrect statements* (inaccurate, wholly or partially) or *inadequate statements*

<sup>2</sup>J. Hopper Wite, J. E. Congleton, Herman F. Spivey, and Alton C. Morris, *The Meaning in Reading*, revised ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1947).

(incomplete, though correct in all that is said). Following this check, the student turns to an analysis which will enable him more fully to get the writer's meaning. This analysis takes the form which the pattern of the material demands. It may revolve about key words or topic sentences, it may trace the grand divisions of the essay, or it may express itself in more detailed outlining. Whatever the case, two important considerations are kept in mind: (1) The technique must logically develop from the essay and not be superimposed upon it; (2) the technique must remain what it rightfully is — a device to get meaning, not an end in itself.

A further consideration in the discussion sections is vocabulary extension. In order that this phase of the work may assume a degree of definiteness, there have been included in the course materials about 2,000 words selected, with permission, from the Thorndike list of 20,000 most commonly used words. Each of these words appearing in the assigned material is followed by the number of the paragraph in which it occurs so that the word may easily be located and its meaning studied in the light of its context. Together with vocabulary extension, study of central idea, and analysis in its various forms, there are almost daily exercises in library exploration, and in oral and written communication.

### *Reading*

Emphasis is placed upon the question of reading from the standpoints of both comprehension and rate. Special stress on this part of the course is initiated in the lecture periods when attention is given to the general problem of reading, the causes of faulty reading, and the means of overcoming these reading difficulties. These lectures explain the different purposes and kinds of reading, indicate the high correlation between a student's ability to read and his success in college work in general, and, after indicating the necessity of taking care of certain physical and psychological considerations, treat with some detail both reading comprehension and rate. The lectures are so timed that they are given just when the scores for the standardized reading test administered early in the term are ready. Instructors immediately give their students the results of the test. A desire to improve their reading is promoted in the students, a basis of self-analysis is provided them, and they begin a program for improvement. Vocabulary study and other matters which have a direct bearing on reading are

given a fresh impetus. The student, motivated to begin immediately on a project to improve his rate of reading, begins a ten weeks' trial period, during which he purposely sets about to correct his faulty reading habits and to increase his rate of reading. Once each week on a designated day each student carries out a self-administered, timed reading, using the essays provided in his text for that purpose. Immediately after reading the essay as fast as he can with comprehension, the student takes a comprehension test based on the central idea and the main subordinate ideas. At the appropriate place he then records in his text the result on his Timed-Reading Schedule and locates the point on his Progress Chart, noting just below his speed graph the comprehension scores. In this manner, each student has constantly available a graphic picture of his reading progress.

While the writing and speaking phases of the course make orderly and continuous progression for both semesters, the material read in the discussion sections shifts with the beginning of the second semester from contemporary expository material to literary selections. For this part of the course an anthology containing material which is not necessarily contemporary is used as a basic text. The whole object of this phase of the course is to aid the student to read and enjoy the various types of literature, though emphasis upon form or type is regarded as of little importance. The lectures are constructed along lines to show how to read literature and how to derive the most pleasure from an association with good books. In the discussion sections, the literature itself is approached with sufficient informality to encourage enjoyment. The purpose is to read literary selections with pleasure, not to study *about* literature.

The student begins with the short story as the form nearest to his experience and interest. He is then introduced to other literary types in this order: the novel, the biography, the drama, and poetry. Stimulating and instructive lectures are presented in these various fields. These are followed by class discussion of the specific selections of the type under study. Every effort is put forth to make the literature attractive and enjoyable with a view to promoting in the student a desire to carry on a varied reading program in the types of material under consideration. The whole purpose, as in the informational essay, is to help the student see the plan employed by



the writer and thereby be able to retrace the writer's thought with the additional aesthetic and emotional overtones. Rather long assignments are made so that the student may read more nearly as he would if he were voluntarily reading the selections. Any analysis or detailed study of a selection or a portion of it is reduced to its rightful purpose — a means.

Parallel reading plays an important part in any program to improve reading habits and tastes. In our course the plan described as "free reading" best fits the conditions. A few thousand books have been purchased for use in the course, and the list is being enlarged annually. These books are selected with two criteria in mind: (1) Is the book likely to be interesting to beginning college students? (2) Is the book worthwhile in style and content? When the books have been selected, they are placed in alphabetical order and included in the course outline. They are then reclassified into small lists grouped according to subject matter or type. That is, books and other selections dealing with the general topic "People and Places" are listed below the material assigned under that topic. Dramas are grouped likewise. When, therefore, a student becomes interested in a given subject or type, additional material is readily available. As a further means of motivating students to read, more than a hundred selected books, including a group on Floridiana, have been classified by type and annotated. Through the practice of these principles and continuous effort on the part of the instructors to create interest in reading, the student ever feels some urge to read. Moreover, no laborious or mechanical form of book report is employed. Chats about books are indulged in between students and instructors both in class and in conference.

As may be deduced, a narrow, prescribed reading list is not employed, since it is felt that the use of such a list tends to stifle the interest of many students and drive them away from books and reading. Each student is allowed to begin reading at his point of interest and level of comprehension. The result is that students in the same class may have widely varied reading lists. This is evidenced by the individual reading record sheets which show the number of books read, their authors and titles, the date each was begun and finished, the number of pages of each, and the total number of pages read. Here again the purpose is to avoid any plan whereby the student may have his reading program made forbidding; rather, the indi-

vidual record serves as an incentive to the student to do more and more reading and at the same time affords the instructor a list of books which he may expect the student to discuss and from which he may advise the student about additional reading.

### *Speaking*

As an integral part of Reading, Speaking, and Writing, oral communication is handled in the discussion sections. This activity is introduced informally as class discussion, proceeds to oral reading, and includes at least six speech projects. Instruction in the fundamentals of speaking is given through lectures, textbook assignments, and class discussion. The speech projects are based on the student's hobby or special interest, on something about which the student has a decided opinion, on some aspect of a general topic, or on the justification of a point of view. In addition, two brief written reports are assigned — one a study of the effect of the first visual impression, the other a study of the use of speech in conversation.

Our approach to the problem of speaking is positive. An effort is made to point out what is good in a student's talk and to indicate how his next talk can be better. Each talk is scored on a five-point scale: lively conversational style; acceptable English — grammar and diction; voice — enunciation and vocal variety; bodily activity — posture, gesture, and facial expression; thought-content and organization. Throughout, the idea of alert communication is stressed.

Our students seem to enjoy the speaking done in the course. Many have asked that more time be devoted to that phase of our program. When, however, all the language arts must have attention and be kept in perspective, it has not seemed desirable to increase our speaking time at the expense of other activities. A student must have something to speak and write about. Mastering a means of communication must follow, or be concomitant with, the acquiring of facts, thoughts, and reactions worthy of communication.

In this connection it should be pointed out that every teacher in our program is a teacher of reading, speaking, and writing. Various phases of the program are not handled by specialists in those areas. There are, of course, some instructors who do not regularly work in writing laboratory sections. This can be accomplished since the instructor of a discussion section usually

does not meet his discussion students in the laboratory. The schedules of both the lecture and the laboratory sections are made without regard to the discussion section schedule. Members of the department of speech give the lectures on speaking, and several members of that department have regularly worked in the course, including the writing laboratory sections. The department head has from the beginning been a member of the course committee and has always taught in the course. Most of the other instructors in the course, drawn primarily from the upper division English department and occasionally from the departments of the foreign languages, journalism, and philosophy, have not previously had any college courses in speech. Our staff, whose training in teaching speech has for the most part been acquired through inservice training, is enthusiastic about the speech phase of our program and even desires that more time be devoted to it.

### *Writing*

The writing phase of the course is handled in a writing laboratory. This plan is an endeavor to correct some of the evils of the traditional composition program wherein proper motivation is almost entirely lacking, and to provide a place where students may write under surroundings conducive to the best creative work. In the description which follows are outlined the physical features of the laboratory and the techniques used there.

Each student registered for the course is assigned to one weekly laboratory of fifty (formerly one hundred) minutes. To accommodate the whole group, the laboratory is open daily from 7:40 to 5:30, with an instructor for each twelve to fifteen students. The laboratory is a well-lighted room approximately fifty feet by thirty feet, furnished with comfortable chairs and ten tables, each of which accommodates six students. Each table in the laboratory is provided with a dictionary and a book of synonyms. These, together with the handbook, a copy of which each student brings to his laboratory period, constitute a trio of books which help the student in answering most of his questions about writing. In addition, there may be found in the laboratory unabridged dictionaries and several reference books for further consultation in case their aid is required to clear up some unusual or difficult point. The room is provided with steel cabinets in which the written

work of each student is kept in a cumulative folder. The room, while plainly and inexpensively furnished, presents a clean, fresh appearance, is attractive, and is suggestive of work.

In the writing laboratory the student and the instructor together go into the student's difficulties. These are determined from a profile of errors prepared by each student. When a paper is returned with errors indicated by a key-number system, the writer tabulates his errors on a chart, a copy of which each student keeps in his folder. Within three or four weeks the student is provided with his personal history of repeated errors, and the instructor can proceed more intelligently with the student's future work. The attack is not made broadside, but with the student's own writing weaknesses in view. Concentration can be made on those habitual errors which through their frequent and persistent recurrence are providing the major source of the student's difficulty. This plan of attack does not entirely replace group instruction. Those difficulties which are found to be common are presented to the group in a systematic way through a set of self-administering exercises designed to help the student correct his weaknesses. These exercises, based on the student's handbook, have the key on the back so that the student may correct his own exercises. Through the aid of his instructor the student may clear up any matter which he cannot master unaided or through discussion with his student colleagues.

Each paper is scored on a five-point scale: organization; originality and thought content; mechanics (punctuation, grammar, and so on); sentence structure; diction. In correcting themes and recording errors, certain fundamental principles are followed. In the first place, the instructors take a positive rather than a negative attitude, attempting not to be mere proofreaders. In the second place, they stress the importance of having each student write his best with no intention of rewriting. Material is copied only when plainly it has been done in a careless manner or when it needs polishing for publication. In the former situation copying serves as a natural punishment for laziness, and in the latter the student is motivated so that copying is far from irksome. In the third place, the instructors stress the correction of each error, whether it be one of spelling or one of sentence structure. Corrections are easily made without the necessity of copying the paper, since all writing is done on alternate lines, thus providing

opportunity for effective revision right in the original context. In addition to these principles, and pervading all, is the effort on the part of the instructor to throw the student on his own resources as much as possible.

During the fourteen years of operation of the writing laboratory, annual enrollment therein has ranged from about one thousand to more than two thousand. Such a number of students working a period a week for an academic year will on an average produce more than thirty thousand pieces of writing. These run the whole gamut as to subject matter and type. Several issues of a booklet entitled "Laboratory Literature," a copy of which was placed in the hands of each freshman, were published prior to the recent war. A further means of motivation has been the publication in the weekly student newspaper of the writing laboratory "paper of the week." Both of these projects, while not carried out each year since the beginning because of the interruption of the war and other internal considerations, have proved desirable. "Laboratory Literature" included some of the best selections produced during the year. The booklet has been entirely the handiwork of the students. A member of the class made the cover designs and, on occasions, other students — sometimes those who could not themselves write acceptable selections — have made pen-and-ink sketches to accompany some of the articles. Moreover, students have made the preliminary selection of the articles to be published.

A few of the titles will illustrate the wide range of interest. There have appeared, for instance: "Why I Am a Pacifist"; "Three Men on a Horse," a critical review of three dramas read in class; "On Eating Spaghetti"; "On Locking the Barn," a clever denunciation of a bit of student misbehavior at a public performance; "For Thirty Pieces of Silver," an excellent short short-story; "Hell's Bells," an ode to the alarm clock; "Dedicatory," an expression of emotion prompted by a complete resignation of the writer to the power of his lover; "The Mississippi's Plea," in which 'Old Man River' addresses himself to early Americans; "Hawkshaw," an account of an experience with a campus night policeman; and "Forgotten Soldier," a thought on Gethsemane. These are merely a few of the more than three hundred thousand selections produced in our writing laboratory since its beginning. These titles, taken from an issue of "Laboratory Literature," illustrate the fact that students, when intrinsically motivated to write,

do not choose the cut-and-dried theme topics which the average college instructor hands down from his "ivory tower."

From the preceding description of the work done in the writing laboratory one should not conclude that the instructors rely upon that something called inspiration to furnish the main-spring for the student's productions. Quite the contrary. The course, of which the work in the writing laboratory is an integral part, consists, as already stated, of a lecture and two discussions each week in addition to the writing period. The lectures present interesting and well-prepared expositions of timely topics. Some are on controversial questions which produce discussion among the students. The class periods use as a basis for discussion contemporary essays or literary selections usually related to the topic of the lecture. Thus, students are regularly having stimulating ideas and thoughts presented to them. These may serve as topics for both oral discussion and written expression. A committee, attempting to keep abreast of the other comprehensive freshman courses, suggests appropriate topics from those sources. Such, in addition to experiences out of the student's life, both before he came to college and after, keep the student stocked with ideas in those cases where the student lacks development in powers of thinking and imagining. Instructors sometimes go so far as to have their students prepare and present at the beginning of the hour brief outlines of the papers to be written during the period. At regular intervals lists of timely topics arising from the season or from the material being presented in the discussion sections are put in the hands of the students to aid the less imaginative ones, while cartoons and clippings on bulletin boards offer other suggestions for writing. Conscious and continued effort is made to dislodge from the student's mind the preconceived idea that he has come to "write a composition." He may produce several bits of writing during one period, or he may work at a longer piece of writing over several successive periods.

In a large heterogeneous group of students such as our freshman classes, there may be found some with poor study habits and some not inclined to make the best use of their time. To keep all engaged at a reasonable degree of efficiency, the instructors have felt that both quantity and quality of writing should be stressed. To overcome the deficiency in quantity, there has been inserted in each student's folder a sheet on

which the student keeps a record of all writing which he produces in the writing laboratory. This ruled sheet is so divided vertically that there are seven columns, in six of which the student records for each composition the number of the paper, the title, the date begun, the date finished, the number of pages and the cumulative total. The seventh column is provided for the instructor's evaluation or comment. Through this means a student is faced each week with an inventory of his semester's work. This sheet, the back of which contains the previously mentioned profile of the student's errors, likewise serves as a means of evaluation in arriving at a progress grade for the student.

### TESTING

Our progress tests and final examinations are designed to measure certain abilities. The objective portion of the progress tests during the first semester and the final examination consist in general of items on vocabulary, reading for the central idea, library usage, mechanics of expression, the course lectures, general literary acquaintance, and the textbook of readings. During the second half of the course, items on the library are omitted, and items on evaluation and interpretation of literary selections are added. Some questions, as shown, are based on specific subject matter. These serve to motivate the student to go through certain activities and procedures in the attainment of desired abilities. In general, however, the student demonstrates his ability to read, speak, and write by reading, speaking, and writing.

On the final examination each student does some oral reading and makes a brief talk on a topic he chooses from a list announced a week or two in advance. This examination is conducted by a member of the staff other than the student's discussion instructor. The scoring is done on the five-point scale already described, with two additional items on oral reading. Likewise, the student writes an examination composition, which in turn is given two independent ratings and even a third or fourth if there is not reasonable agreement in the scores. The ratings are made by use of the scoring box previously mentioned and an analysis sheet. The composition is usually written on one of a list of topics announced at the time of the test, though at times special preparation has been provided for by distributing before the examination a questionnaire on some selected topic and having the student write on

some phase of the topic to be announced at the time of the examination. The latter plan makes for better work but is difficult to administer when large numbers are involved. Throughout the process of scoring the examination composition, the student's identity is kept unknown through use of student numbers.

Finally, the student demonstrates his ability to read by reading some selections not before encountered by him, selecting the central idea of the selections, and answering questions based on the selections. In the second semester, after the student has finished his anthology, this section of the examination, as pointed out above, also embraces some items on the evaluation and interpretation of literary selections. Because of space limitations, poems and short stories are usually selected for this purpose.

Our tests and examinations are designed to keep all students working the full examination period, though some students do finish before the time is called. Moreover, each section of the examination has a suggested time limit. The purpose of these limits, which are announced but not rigidly enforced, is to have each student try each type of material on the examination and to prevent a student from delaying too long on any portion. An effort is made to arrange the items in each portion from easiest to hardest so that there is something the weakest student can accomplish and something which, it is hoped, will challenge the best student.

For the first ten years of our course, the final grade was determined entirely by the student's performance on the final comprehensive examination over the year's work, though several short progress tests were given during each semester and a long progress test was given at the end of the first semester. As an aid to the many students who, during the recent war, had their college programs interrupted at all seasons of the year, each semester's work has for the past few years been treated separately. In addition, the practice of counting the progress tests, the class talks, and the laboratory work in computing the final grade was begun. There are usually two progress tests each semester, each consisting of one hundred and fifty points in the objective portion, fifty to seventy-five points on writing, and twenty-five to forty points on speaking. That is, the test and examination scores are weighted so as to maintain a ratio of 4:2:1 as between the objective score and



the respective scores on writing and speaking. The final examination is twice as long as a progress test so that the student's performance at the end of the semester weighs heavily in determining his standing. Moreover, the tests and examinations are weighted very heavily when considered in the light of the scores taken from class work. For example, a recent distribution based on two progress tests and the semester examination contained a raw score of 1,055. Of this total only one hundred points were taken from the instructor's record of the student's class performance.

When students come to us we have the results from the university's state-wide testing program. For each enrollee we have a psychological score and an achievement score on each of the major areas of the high school program — English, social studies, natural sciences, and mathematics. After the student begins our program we give him a reading test, a test on mechanics, and (if the results are not available from the state-wide test scores) a test on effectiveness of expression. At the end of the year we give a second form of the tests administered at the beginning. The tests given at the beginning serve a diagnostic purpose. The second testing indicates whether our program has been effective.

The reading tests have revealed that 75 percent of our students read with better comprehension in May than did the average student in September, while 70 percent of them read faster than did the average. If we get at this measure by use of the scaled scores as provided with the Cooperative Tests now used, the University Examiner reports that the gains of our students in both comprehension and rate of reading are significant. In the timed-reading project already described, our students have shown an average increase of about 30 percent in rate of reading in ten weeks. This project, while not carefully controlled, is valuable in bringing to the forefront an interest in the problem of reading, and its effects are no doubt reflected in the more accurate measures of the standardized tests. Another result of our program is the parallel reading done. As already stated, our parallel reading is "free reading," there being no requirement. Prior to 1944 our median student reported about 5,000 pages of parallel reading each year. Since the war there has been an appreciable decline in the amount of such reading, our students having become more "practical" in wanting to do only what seemed to have immediate value in

their school program. By all three means described above the results of our effort to improve reading seem at least satisfactory.

The measures of speaking and writing are in the very nature of these activities subjective. There are measures of what a student knows *about* speaking and writing. As to performance, our present students seem to write as well as those who came through in years before our comprehensive course, when our freshman English was a typical written composition course with no attention to speaking. This conclusion is based on the student's ability to correct errors in written expression and on the appraisal of the instructors. It is also borne out by the results of the two mechanics tests, which show significant gains by our students, though mechanics as such are not taught in class but are presented to individual students as need arises and to all students through self-administering tests on common errors. In the course of a year our students compose seventy-five to one hundred pages, and some students do more. Every composition is read and marked by the instructor, corrected by the student, and discussed in a conference between the student and the instructor. Although we find it difficult to motivate students to undertake the discipline required in improving their writing, we feel that our approach is a proper one and that greater improvement could come only through devoting more time to this phase of our program. If, however, that came at the expense of some other phase of our work, we believe we might lose more than we would gain.

As has been stated, speaking had no part in our old freshman composition course. Indeed, prior to the beginning of our course in 1935, the present effective and flourishing department of speech at the University of Florida was small. To give every freshman some competency in communicating ideas orally had not been considered. What success we have had must again be measured in terms of observation and opinion. Most students are anxious to improve themselves in the art of speaking, and it is easy to note the steady — often rapid — changes in our students from speech project to speech project. The semester speech examinations usually culminate in the student's best performance. In a day of radio and movies everyone feels some necessity for being a more effective speaker. Our freshmen respond favorably to the opportunity afforded them to improve their ability in this direction.

The successful operation of a comprehensive freshman English course like Reading, Speaking, and Writing is dependent upon conditions possible of attainment in colleges and universities in general. The staff must distinguish means from ends. This is largely a matter of shift in emphasis and attitude, a matter of getting things in proper perspective. The staff must not forget that learning is an active process and that the communication skills, as other skills, can best be acquired by regular practice in which the most effective techniques available are practiced. Finally, there must be cooperative staff effort in organizing and conducting the course, since all students take the same tests and examinations and since all of these are designed to measure the students' attainment of the course objectives. The intelligent bringing of these principles to fruition will give the instructor the satisfaction of accomplishment and will produce a student who at once knows a great deal more to communicate and has much greater competency in communicating what he knows.

## English Communication at Colgate University

FIVE YEARS ago the Committee on the Postwar College submitted to the Colgate faculty its initial conception of a "basic course in oral and written composition" as a part of the "core" curriculum in general education. Since then, considerable tailoring of the original ideas has taken place such as shifting the course from the sophomore to the junior level; but the changes were in the direction of harmonizing the plan with the objectives of the general education program of the university. Beginning with the freshman year in September 1946, the "core" program of seven full-year courses has been introduced progressively, with the senior course on *The American Idea in Modern Times* to be added next fall. The original aim of English Communication has never been altered. Today, with the course beginning the second term of its first year of full operation, the basic purpose remains the same—to increase the student's effectiveness in writing and speaking.

The chief reason for offering the skill core in the junior year is explained by viewing the course from the perspective of the total program in English expression which requires all freshmen and some sophomores to take individualized instruction in basic English usage as a part of the preceptorial studies program. Freshman writing and composition have not been eliminated at Colgate—an erroneous impression which one occasionally meets; they have been individualized, combined, and placed on a nonacademic basis.<sup>1</sup> Effectiveness of English

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By John B. Hoben, associate professor of English and director of English Communication, Colgate University.

<sup>1</sup>Further information on this phase of Colgate's program may be obtained from Strang Lawson, director of Preceptorial Studies.

The ideas expressed in this report have been gathered through a process of mutual discussion, and the writer acknowledges the contribution of the planning committee and his indebtedness to the staff: Messrs. Adkins, Alvord, Blackwell, Boyce, Gurganus, Surles, and Williams.

expression is included in the Sophomore General Examination, and all students must meet its requirements.<sup>2</sup>

Selection of the modern media of communications as the area for investigation and the major source for subject matter was originally proposed by Porter G. Perrin, who served on the Committee on the Postwar College and at one time as chairman of the Communication Policy Committee. This emphasis has developed from the assumption that, too frequently in the past, composition and speech courses have stressed technique at the expense of the acquisition of knowledge.

Our position is that there is no such thing as effective speaking or writing when content is slighted or divorced. Admitting minor differences in the speaking and writing situations, we contend that they are essentially "complementary modes" in the interchange of thought and feeling, and that for the average student proficiency in the skills is accompanied by the gradual increase of knowledge worth communicating.

The press, radio, and screen seemed particularly appropriate as media for student analysis and observation. Here were the familiar channels of information and entertainment with which every student had some acquaintance but about which he knew little. These media stimulate curiosity and arouse the desire to speak and write, and their scope is sufficiently broad and variegated to provide plenty of opportunity for the student to pursue specific interests.

This speaking-writing course about communications offers another advantage, then, beyond the improvement in skills. A student may graduate leaving the fragmentary sentence and the *and-ab* habit unvanquished, but it is unlikely he will quit the campus without a broader understanding of the impact of mass communications on modern culture and a more critical awareness of the role each citizen must play if the press, the movie, and the radio are to realize worthier goals than yet achieved.

When the staff first assembled last fall to launch the course, Core 11-12, it received no blueprint, no syllabus. Important spade work, however, had been done. The policy committee

<sup>2</sup>Dr. Herman A. Beattigum is chairman of the committee on the Sophomore General Examination.

had studied aim, regulation, method, material, and staffing; and the president and the dean of the faculty had approved its report. Two pilot sections had been offered experimentally in the preceding term and a start made in expanding library facilities. With general agreement on the fundamental aspects, it seemed advisable to *evolve* a specific schedule for the course rather than superimpose one. Consequently fortnightly meetings of the staff were, and still are, the major means for plotting assignments and exchanging ideas concerning teaching techniques.

The general direction of the course is functional, advancing from simpler informational writing and speaking in the first term to the more complex forms of persuasive and critical communication in the second. Content-wise the study of newspapers, newsmagazines, and newscasters is stressed in the first semester, with radio and the screen emphasized in the second.

With the exception of Perrin's *Writer's Guide and Index to English* which is required as a handbook, the chief classroom materials are current issues of newspapers and magazines which are studied throughout the year. For 1948-49 all students of English Communication subscribed briefly to the *New York Times*, *Time*, *Broadcasting*, *Harper's*, *New Republic*, *Variety*, *New Yorker*, and *Mercury*. Additional matter for observation and analysis is provided by motion picture exhibition, radio broadcast, and a special reading-room for the course where a wide variety of daily newspapers are displayed and basic references held on reserve.

The initial two-week block of work was designed to acquaint the student with the general complexity of the communication process involving sender, medium, message, and receiver. In an effort to dramatize the consequences of breakdown in the getting-sending-receiving activity, mimeographed copies of Private Elliott's<sup>3</sup> testimony before the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack were distributed for student consideration and discussion.

Several other assignments were made in the introductory period, including a short report on Henry Luce's Founders' Day Address<sup>4</sup> and the answering of a questionnaire. The aim

<sup>3</sup>He was the radar operator who first spotted the Jap planes.

<sup>4</sup>Delivered at Colgate University, September 24, 1948.

of the latter was to aid the student in self-analysis of his writing and speaking difficulties and to offer a basis for constructive counsel in subsequent student-instructor conferences.

October was devoted to the study of the newspaper as a channel of communication, and the *New York Times* was used as the basis for comparative studies. Its purpose, make-up, content, newsgathering facilities were compared with policies and practices of the *New York Daily Mirror*, *San Francisco Examiner*, *Chicago Tribune* and other papers made available to course members. Special reports were made on the organization of the *New York Times* and the history and function of the major press associations. Several sections wrote letters; several engaged in discussions with a local editor. The hunt for distortion in reporting was climaxed by the now historic *Tribune* banner on November 3: DEWEY DEFEATS TRUMAN. As a culmination to this first block of work each student made a factual report on some phase of the *Times* in which he was interested and was requested to confer with his instructor about his progress in speaking and writing.

The second block of work deal with the newsweekly; three issues of *Time* served as the textbook. "The Story of an Experiment" oriented them to its history and purpose, and other newsweeklies were brought to class and analyzed. To drive home the difference between factual narrative and straight reportage studies were made of the same story as it appeared in a newspaper and in *Time*. In general, oral and written assignments at this point stressed practice in factual narrative and language study. *Time's* racy idiom raised problems in semantics.

The final block of the first term was designed to introduce radio as a channel of communication — a general topic which most instructors wished to extend into the second term. A. N. William's *Listening* proved helpful for orientation. Special reports were assigned on the various networks, F.C.C., A-M, F-M, television, and techniques of audience measurement. Oral and written reviews of news commentators and radio drama exercised student skill in attentive listening and sound judgment. Preoccupation with "listenability" — that elusive quality — led to the importance of voice, and many students had the opportunity to use the tape or wire recorder; al-

though our facilities are not yet adequate to cope with the total demand.

At the end of the term we gave a common two-hour examination to all sections. Since there was individual accent on different aspects of the course within each of the ten sections, the student was allowed option in his choice of questions. Although the examination tested a common body of knowledge, the emphasis fell on the student's ability to limit a subject, to organize, and to state his ideas concisely. One required question on reorganizing a written article for oral presentation to the group was included but, because of the time-consuming nature of speaking, final speeches were made towards the close of the term and not in the university's examination period.

The staff agreed to start Core 12 (second term) with a study of the movies. The assumption was that the introduction of a new medium would help quicken interest at this point. For orientation we were fortunate in having a number of unusual movies presented in the opening week by various campus organizations. "Behind Your Radio Dial" (NBC documentary film); "Sunrise" (with Janet Gaynor); "*Kameradschaft*" (a German semidocumentary) provided excellent material for initial exercises in film reviewing.

Throughout the term the course may sponsor some additional educational and historical films, but arrangements have already been made by the Colgate Film Club to bring to the campus some stimulating pictures.<sup>6</sup>

The *New Republic* proved a timely magazine with which to begin. Functionally the assignments had moved from informational to the opinion types in which the writer and speaker attempt to win support for their views. Structurally, then, this journal of opinion presented articles which proved profitable to students who were experimenting with similar forms. The January 31 (1949) issue contained a special feature section on "Whatever Happened to Hollywood?" — the treatment of which many students compared with the "slick" Hollywood articles which ran in the January issue of *Holiday*.

Concerning actual course practice, this is as far as we have gone with Core 12 to date. General plans for the rest of the

<sup>6</sup>"All Quiet on the Western Front," "M," "Anna Christie," and a program of experimental shorts.



term include short subscriptions to *Variety*, *New Yorker*, and *Mercury*, a program of group discussions on controversial issues within the fields of the press, movie, and radio, and a substantial research project based on the interest of the individual student. We hope to integrate this written project with the role that the student plays in planned discussions and to guide his research with conferences.

We intend to study discussion forms not from a textbook but from auditioning such radio programs as: "America's Town Meeting," "People's Platform," "Invitation to Learning," "Author Meets Critics," "American Forum," and the "University of Chicago Round Table." And before we leave the movies as a general focal point, we anticipate numerous special assignments on the development of the movies, the film making process, organization of a big production company, the documentary film, biographies of producers and directors, continuities, cinematography, and related topics.

To some, no doubt, our framework will seem too dependent on content; and problems of technique may appear slighted. The speech teacher can find no block on the effective use of the body. The composition instructor will miss a section of work treating kinds of paragraphs or punctuation.

Such matters are not excluded from the course plan merely because they are judged to be too elementary. They are viewed, rather, as several problems among many which may arise when a speaker or writer fails to influence a listener or reader in a way which he desires. If the majority of a given group demonstrates the need for help in certain fundamentals, help should be given. Usually, however, difficulties of this nature are special cases which can be remedied more effectively on an individual basis. Only the most hopeless junior will be unable to check excessive random activity or master the rudiments of grammar. Class time is better spent on speaking, writing, and discussing the broader aspects of communication.

Even with general principles of exposition and persuasion, most of us agree that it is more profitable for the individual to derive them from observation and performance than to listen to an instructor expostulate upon them.

If the primary aim of communication is to convey what is interesting and meaningful, then the best student in a

section is the student who, through his speaking and writing, contributes the most to the group's understanding and appreciation of the media being studied.

Whereas this seems like the logical proficiency goal, our staff still has to wrestle with the problem of grading. Professionally trained public speaking, composition, journalism, literature teachers, and administrators cannot shed their biases in a few weeks. For some time to come one would expect the total merit of a speech or paper to be measured too much in terms of gesture, spelling, journalese, or effete style. Mr. A. will insist that "what is said" is more important than "how it is said," and Mr. B. will object.

With such disparity of interests, a tabulation of final grades for the fall term revealed more uniformity than seemed possible; 2 A's, 59 B's, 104 C's, 10 D's, 1 Incomplete, and no F's indicated some confidence in sorting out the good from the average and weak, but timidity with respect to the superior and the poor. The distribution of no one teacher was really out of line with the total apportionment which, as in most new courses, was too generous.

This year the staff has been so preoccupied with materials and the framework of the course that it seems wise to defer serious investigation of reliable criteria to 1949-50.

English Communication at Colgate is still in the toddling stage. Its first steps, however, have been in the direction of its objectives. A valuable start has been made in the discovery of the newspapers, magazines, radio programs, motion pictures, and reference works best suited to its function; although considerable work must yet be done on how to use them more constructively. In spite of the difficulties of staffing, which has called for sacrifice of time and energy on behalf of men with major interests in other fields; the group has confronted the new task with friendly give-and-take. To date, the course has survived the pressure for larger classes and will end its first year having averaged eighteen students for each section, allowing for considerable individual guidance and student activity.

No realistic evaluation of the experiment is possible, of course, until the program has met the test of time. Three years from now, we can better judge the journey. Highway or detour — the first uphill mile has been invigorating.

## The Role of Principle in Teaching Writing to Undergraduates

I SHALL say at once that I believe in the possibility of teaching writing in colleges and universities, at either freshman or advanced levels. I say this because I think that a major barrier to teaching writing effectively is a kind of defeatism, engendered by defeat, but not warranted by the facts of experience. My own teachers, with one notable exception, did not believe that writing could be taught; and for many years I thought as they did. Not until I had to teach writing was I required to face this squarely, and to consider the consequences of such a way of thinking for my classroom procedure. Then I saw that to believe writing cannot be taught is to resign before one has begun, for to believe that writing cannot be taught is not merely to fail to see a way, but to deny that there is a way, to teach it.

Besides, one can easily dispose of the view that writing cannot be taught: one has only to ask, "But can writing be learned?" The former problem no longer signifies, and a new one takes its place — one that must be answered with at least a qualified affirmative, for the weight of experience is against any other conclusion. One test of whether a thing has been learned is simply to ask, "Do you remember when you couldn't do it?" If the answer is affirmative, one then asks, "Do you remember anything you did to become able to do it?" The answer "yes" establishes that the thing in question has been learned, and consciously; this is important, for unless there has been learning, and unless it has been conscious, there will be no immediate basis for teaching the same thing. We all know instances of experts who cannot teach: I may mention the almost total failure of most athletes to teach athletic proficiency to those who do not have it, and contrast with this the success of some brilliant nonathletes in teaching the same

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athletic proficiency. The athlete has usually learned his skill unconsciously — notice that this is different from saying that he has not been taught — and one of the techniques of becoming pedagogically proficient at almost anything one already knows how to do is to analyze one's own stages of mastery, in an attempt to recover the process of learning in a sufficiently concrete form for communication to others. This is seldom perfectly achieved, of course, and is frequently quite impossible; but it is always necessary to some extent, for nothing discourages more than an attempt to teach what one does not know to have been learned. I have only to call upon the common experience of teachers of English in support of this point.

This need not be the case, for surely writing has been learned, in the experience of nearly every writer of any proficiency. Writers seldom argue that they did not have to learn their craft, and if they do we refute them easily: their work shows, their early drafts show, their notes show that they learn something new from nearly every effort to write, from many endeavors unrelated to writing entirely, and from some at least of the reading they do. Writing is always learned, I believe; and if we only analyze the process of learning well enough we can teach others to write. (You will grant that showing them the way, and stimulating them to follow it, is teaching.)

But a colleague generalizes, "Nothing you can say to a student will improve his writing; I'm convinced that the only way to learn to write is to practice." In this view the function of the teacher is to show the learner what to practice, and perhaps why, since it may be that given reasons the student will practice more diligently. But there is an answer to this argument, and it is a convincing one: to place it in a somewhat simpler context, notice that one can, and often does, say to a person batting in a game of baseball something that improves his effectiveness as a batter. "Stand with your feet closer together," the coach suggests; the batter does, and hits the ball more often. The teaching has been effective. No one argues that practice is inessential: the point is that it is not the whole story, and that it may not in certain cases substitute for information which has only to be heard to be put into effect. So the batter may be told how to bat well; the writer may be told how to write well; and some of the suggestions may be usable at the moment of communication. I recently gave a brief lecture to

one of my classes on the use of concrete versus abstract language in effective writing. One of my students turned in the next day a long and brilliantly written paper, which seemed to incorporate all my remarks: when I commented that he must have found my talk superfluous, he replied that on the contrary he had merely rewritten the theme he had been writing for several days previously, in order to incorporate in it all the suggestions that I had made in class. His writing had improved; I have not said that it will not further improve with practice; but I think that in this one respect it has already made a tremendous improvement. The student had been writing for me for seven months, and had never written so well, because he had not been told (one of the deficiencies of a carefully regimented curriculum — it was not the business of the first two quarters to teach him this) about concrete language and its value for effective exposition and argument.

We must, then, differentiate between what must be practiced in order to be achieved and what has merely to be thought of to become a part of one's technique. Now it is certainly true that the student mentioned will not habitually write concretely, or even with an eye to the concrete, until he has practiced such writing. But what is proved by this? Only that habit must in every case be learned, nothing more. If in a class in writing the teacher can mention, or otherwise call attention to, principles or conventions which are important in the writing process, then he may not be teaching writing itself: he is surely teaching the student something that will enable him to write better; and any distinction here would be academic. Nor is it worthwhile to take any more than passing note that a poor student will probably not put into effect what he is told, for he will probably not practice enough to make good writing habitual either: who expects anything else? These are tautologies: such behavior characterizes the poor student, and if he does not act in this way, he is not a poor student. That there is a significant problem in this direction is beyond question, but I shall not try to deal with it here.

We distinguish, then, between elements in the learning process which can be communicated and those which cannot, and between those which need to be practiced and those which do not. The first problem of the teacher of writing would be to discover what he can communicate, and then what of this he must prescribe for practice. He will investigate the problem,

forewarned that probably no student finds the regular theme assignments enough practice for thorough learning of any principles; no student finds the school year long enough for understanding the principles, for that matter. And the student's problem is rendered infinitely more difficult by the fact that his teacher has probably not made clear to him what the principles really are. The first stage of the teacher's problem seldom finds solution: the great majority of teachers of writing have no analysis of the process of communication, or even of the writing process itself, sufficient to use in teaching the principles of writing to students in their classes.

## II

I do not intend to urge any specific kind of analysis. I know several which can furnish the sufficient basis I have mentioned. But let me stress that in a class it is not enough to know several kinds: the students are not prepared to study this sort of problem; nor is the course in writing prepared to accommodate it. The instructor must have studied the matter until he is satisfied that he has an analysis of the problem which will furnish the basis for understanding by the students of what they must do in order to write well. He must be prepared to present this analysis, and to explain it, and finally to follow it at each stage with assignments which will bring out of the student some indication of his understanding of the principles involved, so that both he and his instructor may have grounds for criticizing his grasp of the problem.

In my own classes I have used an analysis based on the semiotic of Mr. Charles Morris in his *Signs, Language, and Behavior*.<sup>1</sup> This analysis affords the student a sufficient number of critical principles, and makes sense to him in terms of his other learning in the undergraduate curriculum. This is something that many present-day courses fail to do: witness the distress of the biological scientist in embryo when he faces the "literary" type of course in which the most interesting reading will probably be somebody's essay or short story about a

<sup>1</sup>Charles Morris, *Signs, Language, and Behavior* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1946). While it seems impracticable to attempt any detailed explanation of this work, I may point out that by analyzing symbolic situations Mr. Morris obtains four *modes of signifying* and four corresponding *uses* (i.e., purposes) of language, from which he derives by exhaustive combination sixteen *types of discourse*. These furnish a useful basis of principle in teaching writing, since students readily grasp Mr. Morris's distinctions, and find it possible to produce examples of the types—some types, of course, more easily than others—for themselves.

horse. My students can understand this analysis, without fully assimilating it, perhaps, well enough to apply its principles to their own writing. They find confirmation of these principles in their study of texts — I should hesitate to present this particular approach to a group which had to get along without regular readings — and can even elaborate these principles through careful observation and practice. I have said that I am not urging a particular approach: I have used Aristotle's *Rhetoric* successfully in the same way; and there are several other systematic treatments available. What is important is that they be systematic, in order that they may afford students a continuing foundation for further study of writing — and, no less importantly, of literature as well. It is not difficult for students to recover such knowledge, and to use it for their own ends.

Notice how the contrasts with the usual conditions of students who may not have learned thoroughly in their courses in writing: they have forgotten what the teacher used to tell them; or, worse, they remember only a part of it. And if what they were told was largely unsystematic, and unprincipled, it is unlikely to make sense to them even to the degree that they remember it, and it is certain to be much more difficult to remember. Even if this were the only justification for a course founded on principles, it would seem surely to be enough.

The procedure I follow in presenting a course of this kind is simply explained. As a first stage, the class studies examples, not at random, but according to the prefigured design of its instructor, in order to get principles of writing. Remember that the instructor has already determined what is going to have to remain unexplained in his analysis — for example, where in the world a certain writer gets those remarkable images — and will concentrate in this stage upon the understanding of what can be observed in the examples, and fitted into a systematized view. The students next write, using insofar as they are able the principles already derived, and striving for improved use of these in their own writing. As a third stage the student considers his writing, now corrected by the instructor in the light of the *same* principles (about this more later), and compares his writing with some of the models already studied for the same points. As an example of an early principle in one approach, we may judge writing generally, ours as well as that of others, by the standard of how well it accomplishes

its purpose. (This remains true for the Aristotelian, as well as for the Morris, approach, although for Aristotle the sense in which it is true must be qualified.) We analyze passages for their purpose, or intention, insofar as it is discernible; at the same time we carry on a more formal analysis of communication in general, asking what purposes are possible to the medium of language. We may then inquire how these function in prescribing our choice of one over another way of executing a given writing assignment. The students are asked to write a paper carrying out some specific intention, and subsequently are asked to consider hypothetical intentions together, as if they were going to try to carry them out. In this way they eventually become able to discuss irony, satire, and other special modes of expression which it is nearly always difficult to explain well to classes without clear principles of analysis.

The students' writing is read by the instructor with an eye to the stated intention: it is often possible to show a student that some other intention than the one he has stated is present; and I plan for this by selecting topics which will probably call out in the student predictable responses—for example, "The Types of College Students," a subject that many of them cannot resist treating otherwise than in an objective, classificatory way — and specifying an objective treatment. The papers which result can be effectively, and interestingly, demonstrated to reveal the convictions of their authors; and the group may consider together several such pieces of writing, and try to point out how a mixture of intentions has affected their selection and organization of material. (Since papers of this kind usually suffer from the mixture, most of the examples will be inferior to those in which nothing so ambitious is attempted. Nevertheless it is worthwhile to look for a theme in which the mixture of intentions has been accomplished well, and to make this the basis of an important discussion. Lacking this, one must simply warn the class that not every such paper is bad, and if possible show why this is the case.)

To recapitulate, from reading analytically, on a foundation provided by the instructor, the students perceive certain principles, and organize these into a critical apparatus with which to criticize either their own work or someone else's; they then write, keeping the principles in mind, short experimental papers; finally they criticize their papers, with the help of the instructor, in an effort to see better how the principles



involved can lead to good writing, and how a departure from them, if not in effect a new principle, will eventuate badly. Ideally they should go on to further experimentation, and to further criticism, indefinitely, or until they and the instructor are satisfied that the fullest possible progress has been achieved; but in practice they may move on to new texts, further developing their critical apparatus, and to more experiments, further developing their techniques, as long as their time permits.

Three advantages of this procedure will bear mentioning. First, it makes possible a good deal of independent thinking and experimenting by the students. Aware of the way in which they are obtaining their principles, they are free to strive for more, to read widely in an effort to learn, and to study the problem theoretically if they like, without endangering their own progress. If this is not clear, remember that in the usual course in writing, the student must observe the authority of a textbook which is not explicit about its own philosophical position, and which accordingly must be accepted on faith. Not only will he be unable to translate any other theoretical analysis into the terms of his own, but he will probably be unable to recognize the need for translation, and will regard differing analyses as simple disagreements over fact. Such a student is far more constrained than helped by a textbook of this kind, in the long run; and for him the kind of approach I have outlined will be an emancipation.

Second, this kind of approach militates against an uncomprehending and too literal *imitation* by the student of models from his reading, because it puts into his hands an instrument for distinguishing between fact and principle. Having learned to regard special devices as means to particular ends, the student will no longer want to use such devices indiscriminately; and having begun to understand how it is that devices may function to carry out ends, he will begin to see more clearly how and to what extent he may adopt a given device as his own.

I stressed earlier that the instructor should use the same principles as his students. This may have seemed redundant in its context, but I wished to call attention to a quite usual practice of instructors in criticizing papers — that of correcting them on the basis of classroom procedure and a designated

textbook, while *judging* them by private and often mystical standards, haphazardly arrived at, and stubbornly retained. This difficulty arises in another way when in a course prescribed by the institution, or by the staff of which he is a member, an instructor departs radically from the rationale of his course without adjusting the assigned readings and the written exercises accordingly. Conflict in principle — or over principle — between instructor and course results inevitably in confusion for students; and it is not encouraging to hear such behavior rationalized as academic freedom and individuality. Students expect a basis of principle — I think justly — in every course of study, unless an explicit statement informs them to the contrary; and there is probably less excuse for confusion in a course in writing than in any other kind: a course in writing is the only one which it is no profit to remember for its content alone. That the approach I have suggested virtually insures the presence of a common ground between teacher and student constitutes its third immediate and striking advantage over traditional methods.

### III

Some instructors would point out that all this takes time; and I agree that it does. It also takes care, unless it is to degenerate into something of the sort of thing practiced at many schools, where the students read and write without seeing any valid connection between the two. "I enjoyed English because I liked the readings," a student told me, "but I don't see how they fit into the writing at all." Practically, for some students no amount of care is enough: some of them will always refuse, or at least fail, to see the connection between their reading and their writing. But this need not be the general experience of students.

Further, this sort of program relies heavily upon reading competence in both teacher and student. It may be observed that few freshmen read well enough to learn this much from texts. But in offering this observation as an objection one would reveal a misconception of the way a student derives principles from his reading. This embraces an objection that may as well be voiced: some will dislike the guiding role of the instructor in this approach. These people would prefer that students proceed through a broad inductive pattern to the formulation of principles and the adoption of a critical position. Two things urge against this: (1) few minds grasp

anything resembling a systematic set of principles from inductive study; (2) even if it were attainable the induction would have to follow from much more reading and thought (for ninety-nine of a hundred students, at any rate) than any college course is ever likely to allow. The answer to our previous question now becomes apparent: the students are not to be expected to read a text, and to obtain, unaided, or undirected, the desired critical facility. They are to be instructed in the problem at hand, whatever it may be at the moment, and to be helped to see how the reading they do shows the principle in operation. For example we may take a passage from *Gulliver's Travels* in order to demonstrate how Swift's multiple intention may in the first place be discerned, and in the second place substantiated, through an examination of the text. It is extremely important that the instructor have anticipated such a study by deciding the principles to be obtained from it, and that he not allow the students to draw just any points at all from the example. He will set no limit, of course, but he will endeavor to fix upon certain objectives, and to proceed as efficiently as possible to showing what those objectives are and how they may be obtained.

The teacher has a choice in this procedure between making the students' criticism conscious or allowing it to remain unconscious; and he may want the latter. Certainly many, if not all, great writers seem to have arrived at their faculty of self-criticism — and I attribute the largest share of writing excellence to the exercise of that faculty — without bothering to make any conscious formulation of their position. And when such writers come to write, they choose without seeming to be aware of their critical standards, the way of writing they prefer. Indeed, this is the universal practice: nearly everyone writes nearly all the time without consciously considering his own criticism. But the choice is there; and our good choices, and consequently our good writing, are limited by our critical development. For most people this depends upon the scope and depth of their reading; for some it is aided by a flexible and effective participation in the speaking-listening complex, which they transfer as best they can to writing. (This latter may be very bad: some of the most eloquent students write abominably when they really have strong feelings about something, because they write down the things they would say if allowed to speak. Frequently they may read such stuff with

real intensity, and the instructor who *bears* it may have to guard against accepting it as good *writing*.) One may prescribe for students, "Go out and do more reading, and then more reading, and then some more, and continue to practise writing, so that in time you may come to write more nearly like the great writers whom you study." I think that this is consistent with the desire to have critical principles remain unconscious for the student. But I cannot agree that it is desirable. It seems to me that it begs the whole question of teaching, and that there is no reason to think that such advice as this is going to have any effect. Demonstrably, people do not function so efficiently. And, finally, subconscious critical positions have the glaring fault of susceptibility to irrational, and even to chance, predilections. The strong affinity in freshmen for phrases like "without a doubt," "one of the greatest," and so on cannot be based on rational choice in any sense of the term.

Nearly all courses in writing try to bring the student to some conscious critical position, however; and I probably need not argue this point longer. A more significant disagreement takes place over the kind of critical apparatus and the specific critical conclusions which a student ought to learn. I believe that most of what students are now saddled with in freshman and advanced courses in writing is claptrap. I look back on my own experience in the classroom — as a student, I mean — with horror and despair. There was one exception: the best teacher I ever had taught me English composition for three years in a grammar school in Texas. She taught me all the grammar and punctuation I know, and helped me to put it into its not very important place in the writing process. She made clear that there were both principles and conventions in writing, and that she was teaching conventions, and that if we wanted the principles we would have to go somewhere else. I did go somewhere else, eventually, but I never found anyone prepared to explain the principles. And outside of a few die-hard classicists, who have studied ancient texts *ad nauseam*, I still have not found anyone teaching writing on a basis of principle. Most of the English teachers I know believe that there is no place for principle in a course in writing — on what ground I am not at all sure. Others point to the entirely reasonable divergence resulting from differences of philosophical bias as evidence invalidating all principle whatsoever. That people in general do

not differentiate inconsistency within a position from the conflict arising out of different positions need not concern us here; but I cannot resist pointing out that it is lamentably characteristic of those who insist on teaching conventions as the stuff of composition.

I had better be more explicit. I refer to the teacher who on one hand teaches grammar as a sort of divine gift for man's guidance and on another, having abandoned grammar, resorts to lengthy examinations of description and narration, or dwells upon the nature of "exposition" and "argument," and similarly vague and confusing classifications (culminating, I suppose, in "the informal essay" and "human interest stories"). By *conventions* I mean these things. They are often good things to know, but they are not always true; and they blanket our writing if we treat them as always true. Elevating conventions to the status of principles is frequently comic with Oscar Wilde: it is more nearly tragic in present-day teachers of English. It may be prudent for me to add that I realize the implicit principle in the distinction between "exposition" and "argument": the difference between writing to inform and writing to influence is at least a rudimentary *principle* of writing from most views of the process. "Exposition" and "argument" can be used well and subtly to help students understand what they are doing when they write, and how they may go about improving what they do. But in their usual capacity they confuse by masquerading as principles, and dismay by refusing to work.

Controversy will arise, again, over the way students are to obtain their principles. The opponents of reading as a road to writing are numerous. I think that probably many of them really oppose reading because it is not a good way of teaching conventions, and not because it is ineffectual in providing principles; but whatever their reasons, these opponents are strong in some quarters and demand our attention. The miserable truth is that there is only one other really adequate source of principles for students besides a systematic study of written discourse, and that is authority, either the teacher's, a critic's, or a textbook's. The first is popular, because it flatters the teacher's ego, but has a strategical weakness in that the teacher must assert his points and maintain them without evidence, since his only evidence would come from reading. The second has the double disadvantage of having been written for a special audience and of representing an undetermined philo-

sophical bias: if two or more critics are appealed to, the teacher must still be able to clarify any differences in their fundamental positions for his students, else confusion inevitably results. Need I point out how few are qualified to do this adequately? The third is obviously without merit, since even if there were textbooks which dealt fully and well with genuine principles, capable of being applied to writing problems, they could scarcely be made clear without the recourse to numerous extended examples. I have dealt with each of these, and have not yet pointed out that authority in general would be of little use except where it coincided in its fundamental position with the approach already adopted, whatever that might be.

We are driven back upon reading, it seems, and I believe that I have already shown that the greatest objection to reading is answerable by a systematic procedure of selection by the instructor, who is at least more likely to be able to fulfill this role than to meet the demands of the interpretative one I mentioned in connection with the use of critical texts. I ought to add that I think critical sources desirable, if the teacher is able to handle them, and to help the students learn from them; and a textbook has much to recommend it when it is adequate to the problems of the course. The procedure I outlined earlier might be elaborated in this way: it would begin with a study of examples, from which principles would be drawn, as before, then turn to various critical texts for purposes of comparison, returning finally to the original examples for a resolution of differences, and an illustration of points, found in the critics. Fruitful, and satisfying to the student, this sort of procedure nevertheless requires a more skillful and comprehensive pedagogy than can be counted on for a long time to come.

#### IV

I have assumed that good writing implies the exercise of a critical faculty. By this term I mean a set of criteria for making explicit judgments about various ways of saying what is said at a given time. I would call this the most significant characteristic of writing problems: the distinction of content and form, or, as I prefer, the *what* and the *how*. I know that it is fashionable in some quarters today to ignore this distinction as wholly theoretical or even meaningless. (And from an aesthetic point of view I can sympathize with this position.) But I encounter too many pieces of writing which are simply not executed well,

though their content is excellently conceived and eminently satisfying to me. No one can read certain of our prominent social scientists without realizing that they do not write well in the former sense: what they say is admirable, and enlightening; but it is painful for us to dig it out, or when that is easy, it is unpleasantly dull for us to follow. Demurrers may still argue that in most cases good writing follows from having something to say. I recently took up this point with some teachers who wanted to introduce writing into a course in the humanities. I did not oppose the introduction of writing into the course, but I did object to introducing writing without knowing whether it was (1) to help students learn their material, (2) to improve their writing in general, or (3) to teach them how to write about the humanities. I was told that all three were intended. But these are quite different sorts of ends: if one believes that there is not much difference between having something to say and knowing how to say it, then one thinks it necessary to teach people how to write about each separate subject, since, apparently, anyone who can write about it knows it; and so one teaches students to write in a course in humanities. On the other hand, if one believes that students need to be checked in their writing generally, then one teaches them to write—in general—in every course where time can be made. I agree with the latter position, except that I think a course in which so much time can be found should not be in the curriculum; for teaching writing is a special problem, and not easily connected with any other study, unless it be the study of language itself, or the psychology of language. Stopping to teach writing ought to be a burden to the teacher of other subjects, and an impediment to his students, for it will distract from the problems of the other subjects, and detract from their intrinsic interest.

Writing about a thing is obviously a way of learning it, for an effort to express oneself in language tends to clarify one's thinking. But this use should not entail teaching *writing*: in judging the student's written work, in courses having a specific content, we are not properly interested in his manner of writing but in his meaning, and if he only makes this clear, we do not criticize his way of expressing himself at all. Similarly we can begin to use writing in other courses only when the student can be counted on to write well enough on the level of how he expresses what he wants to say to make his meaning clear.

It seems to me essential, then, to distinguish between the *what* and the *how of writing*.<sup>2</sup> As a fundamental distinction it should underly the planning of every curriculum, for upon it would depend the selection and arrangement of courses designed to impart writing skill to students. If we believe that writing can be taught—that is, learned—we shall be willing to devote time to teaching it; if we believe that writing as a special skill has a sphere apart from the expression of particular subjects, then we shall be willing to devote separate courses to teaching it. If we believe that there are principles of writing discoverable through a study of language in written form, then we shall be willing to organize and perfect thorough-going courses based on such study. I confidently expect that not far off is the curriculum in which at least three years are devoted to a study of language, written and spoken, with a view to improving all four elements of the reading-writing-speaking-listening complex, as well as understanding better the function of language in all the fields of human endeavor. The advantage of the particular approach that I have mentioned earlier is its capacity for furnishing insights into all these problems. But other approaches may be equally good, or better, in achieving these aims, and I would ask only that the aims be considered as more important than the means we adopt in striving for them.

I have not meant to overstep the bounds of my original project: that was to discuss whether writing courses based on principles could be incorporated practicably in a curriculum, and if so how they should be taken up, and what should be expected from the enterprise. That I have been led to discuss the curriculum demonstrates the necessity of doing so in any comprehensive treatment of the immediate problem of writing. I maintain that a general study of language furnishes a more rational, hence more palatable basis to students for their learning of writing (and, incidentally, of reading, speaking, and listening); it furnishes as well an insight into the meaning of language problems, into the importance of language in their other studies, and into the function of language in their own thinking and feeling at all times, and the latter is probably a more significant advantage. This kind of approach is certainly more efficient than present methods, granting only that the teachers necessary to its proper execution may be found.

<sup>2</sup>For a contrasting, and indeed diametrically opposed, view on this question, see Richard Weaver, "To Write the Truth," *College English* (October 1948).



## V

I have come to the heart of the problem, and to a question I have avoided thus far because without a good deal of preparation I should have seemed to be rehashing the old issue of unifying literary study and composition departmentally. Of course as administered today these branches of instruction are fundamentally distinct; and some departments of English have recognized this by dividing themselves into a "literature" and a "composition" section. This is a natural solution under the circumstances; but the circumstances are bad; and what makes them bad will constitute my next point of inquiry.

Let me be clear: the principal source of our present difficulties, it seems to me, is the nature of the training of college teachers of English. Whether this results from the inferior caliber of the material, or whether that inferiority is the result of the present training program, I shall not venture to decide. But the training ought to be improved; and if this cannot be done without improving the quality of English majors, then that too should be improved. In any event, that one of the limitations of this paper should be ignorance of either the significance of philosophical positions generally or the nature of particular philosophical treatments of such problems on the part of a great number of teachers of English is a sorry state of things, and ought to be so recognized at least.

A significant value of the kind of program I suggest is its offering a basis for the general student's study of literature. Out of his sound study of language, together with some understanding of such concomitant subjects as aesthetics, psychology, and logic, will emerge a foundation for literary study that will be both incitive and fruitful to the student. This implies that his "sound study" must be more than a linguistic, or grammatical, investigation: it must be philosophically based, rather than historically, and it must be considered broadly enough to include the question of placing various forms of written and spoken discourse — that is, differentiating literary kinds, and literary forms, and relating them to the whole of literature and to one another. The approach of Mr. Morris satisfies this criterion; and it would afford an insight into the problems involved in literary study that has not yet been generally attained. There may be many better approaches, from some points of view, and in fact any approach that is fairly complete could be utilized in this way.

But one sees readily that the teaching of writing and literature on this basis would be futuristic, and indeed implausible, in a department staffed by men themselves untrained in such language study. Notice that the only men ordinarily equipped to embark on such a program today are linguistic scholars, and it might be urged that some of these men are not trained, as I put it, philosophically, but historically: they have only a historical knowledge of language and its problems. Few of the members of the usual department of English, at any rate, could be expected to teach in the way I have outlined, and nothing could more effectually prevent the institution of my proposals. And yet this need not be true entirely; for while the situation prevents correcting all at once, and sweepingly, it in no way hinders making some small start today, where agreement can be reached.

Defenders of the *status quo* may argue that adopting any plan of procedure would mean adopting some view of language which would not be acceptable to most individuals. Without violence to liberalists, let me suggest that *this* means that no philosophically based study can ever be made use of in the typical large department of a university. And yet this concession to liberalism is unnecessary, for we have only to look at departments of physical science to see that a group may take a single position, with all its attendant advantages for teaching and research, without prejudicing individual positions that may happen to differ from the central one. Not all scientists are atheists, despite the way in which most departments of physics explain the behavior of matter. It is true that for many years physical scientists were largely blind to the plurality of possible philosophical approaches to the phenomenal world, but I have never heard it argued that this was due to the relinquishing of personal views to the will of a group. Similarly I should expect to find that in a department of English a convenient approach could be adopted without violating the rights of its members to their personal views, and without misleading students about what was being done. If it is explained to them that theirs is only one among several possible approaches to problems, students are not likely to think that they know the only approach there is.

I am saying that I think it is more serious for teachers to have no knowledge of how language functions than for some of them to have to subordinate their own views to a group method.

And I think that the advantages of a single approach, whatever its particular form, and granting that it fulfill the conditions I have set down, would outweigh any immediate personal discomfort it might occasion. I speak here only of general education, and where the number of undergraduates demands regularly scheduled classes, assigned arbitrarily to an instructor. On a higher level, as in graduate studies, there is no need to find a unifying approach; and each instructor ought, I believe, to have sole responsibility for both his principles and his methods. I have not intended to undermine this prerogative.

Training of teachers, then, would have to include some understanding of the nature of language, and of the way in which language can be studied to yield insights into literary activity of all kinds, as well as to furnish a basis of thought for learning reading and writing, speaking and listening, in their own language. This experience, perhaps the profoundest and certainly the most exacting discipline for a prospective teacher, would result in a better grasp of all kinds of literary problems, of writing as a process, and of the ways these relate to human activity as a whole; it would result, too, in more precise and effective teaching of writing and literature to undergraduates. Finally, it should in the long run help to raise the standards among colleges and universities for student achievement in departments of English, for it should encourage more intelligent students, and particularly those who are eager to study profoundly, to consider the humanities, especially literature, as possible fields of study. The present-day undergraduate finds his English teachers largely without knowledge outside fact, and without judgment outside impression. I can think of no reason why this should continue to be true indefinitely.

If I have gone beyond rescue into the domain of intrepidity by seeming to criticize teachers of English as incompetent in their field, I hasten to explain that I did not mean to go so far. I wanted only to observe that many teachers lack any foundation upon which to build analytical and critical methods. But I am struck by the great number to whom this applies. For is not the most frequent of valid criticisms of English teachers everywhere that they use the most superficial observations of likeness and difference to classify, and the most undiscoverable sources of impressions to judge, works which confront them daily? Certainly the quite widespread feeling among teachers

of English that criticism must be subjective, and is otherwise undemonstrable, results from their lack of the philosophical discipline which must underly any criticism *other* than the subjective. It is also partly a result of the disinclination to analyze, and to place judgments on a firm basis, that characterizes many of those who choose English studies. But, as I pointed out before, this is consequent to the kind of training as much as it is causal to it: offered a profounder training, better students will inevitably respond.

## VI

From the position that writing can be learned, and hence taught, we saw first that by distinguishing between what can be communicated and what cannot, we can decide on a teachable area of writing skill. But an ability to make such distinctions turned out to depend on an analytical knowledge of the process of writing. Teachers themselves can scarcely be expected to furnish thorough-going and systematic analyses of their own devising; but there *are* available several analyses of at least formal adequacy to the problem. And we saw that they could be used in classroom procedure to yield significant advantages over more traditional methods. Certain points of possible controversy required examination, and we saw that if these could not be settled absolutely in favor of the position advanced they at the same time constituted no positive barrier to its adoption. This argument implied further, and more significantly, an intensive study of language itself; and I tried to show that this was an advantage not only in terms of teaching writing but in terms of integrating writing with reading and with the spoken language on the one hand, and obtaining a deeper understanding of the relation between literary (or aesthetic) and scientific uses of languages on the other; concomitantly I pointed out that these were of benefit, indirectly, to the entire curriculum, both administratively and pedagogically considered. At this point it was necessary to recognize that a real objection to the position lay in its demands upon teachers, who in order to execute such an approach adequately would have to possess some degree of philosophical competence, and a thorough training in the language process, at least. I was able to urge, however, in support of such training that its lack is detrimental to teaching writing, literature, and speech even under present methods; and that for this reason it should not be made to wait

upon the adoption of a principled approach, but should be undertaken now.

It will perhaps be felt that I have not sufficiently explained what I mean by an approach based on principle; and I must concede that I have not been so explicit as I should have liked. I have spoken of my aim as being to discuss whether courses based on principles could be instituted in a writing program, and if so how they should be taken up and what should be expected from them. I must now defer to a subsequent study a detailed consideration of two specific problems: (1) how pedagogical devices may be obtained from systematic analysis of the writing process; (2) how practical agreement can be reached about the particular basis (that is, approach) to select at a given time and place, considering the place of writing in the curriculum as a whole. This answer to the problem of how principles should be taken up, granting that (1) their practicability, and (2) their efficacy have been demonstrated, will complete what I have stated to be the three parts of this endeavor. I hope that the other two are by now if not convincing at least clear.

## Teaching the College Student to Write

NO COURSE in the college curriculum has given less satisfaction than that in writing. For decades it has been attacked for its failure to teach students to write clearly or even correctly. For decades professors of other subjects have been irritated by the papers handed to them by students supposedly trained in the department of English. College presidents, even at an institution like Harvard, have deplored the fact that graduates are unable to write with ordinary correctness. Many leaders in the world of affairs are on record as complaining that graduates who come to them for employment cannot write presentably in the mother tongue. At least from the time when Charles W. Eliot, in the heyday of the elective system, declared there was one course and one only that should be required, the course in English composition, responsible opinion in all fields — medicine, law, engineering, business, and so on — has maintained that a decent and intelligible use of English for communication is a *sine qua non* of the educated man.

In view of a universal recognition of the importance of the written word and the flood of adverse criticism from every quarter, college administrators have given the English department ungrudging support in its efforts to solve the problem. Both in hard cash and in human energy, the course in writing is one of the most expensive in the entire curriculum. But expense and success are not the same. Subjective criticism continues to pour in from every source, and objective estimates (whatever they may be worth) continue to be bleakly discouraging. Realism, not cynicism, begets a recurring suspicion that graduating classes would write just as they now write if they had never been required to take the freshman writing course.

### I

This costly failure is not the result of insufficient effort to solve the problem. For more than half a century depart-

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By Norman Foerster, co-author *Writing and Thinking*, and former president of College English Association.

ments of English have labored with devotion and repeatedly altered the writing course in the light of their experience. In the opening decade of the present century the course was generally called — with good classical precedent — *Rhetoric*. The student learned about sentences, paragraphs, and whole compositions, about the four Forms of Discourse, about the trinity of Unity, Coherence, and Emphasis, about qualities of style such as Ease and Elegance; and he wrote themes, long themes, short themes, sometimes daily themes, which the instructor conscientiously blue-pencilled. The student wrote on any and every topic, usually a trivial topic, for content mattered little. Naturally he racked his brains for something to write about (he had plenty of material, of course, but was unaware of it), or for something that he really cared to write about (only, why should he care when the object was writing, not writing about?). Often he was asked to study readings, extracts from great writers on any and every topic, for again content mattered little, the readings being regarded merely as models of literary style.

Long experience with this course suggested that emphasis had better be shifted from artistic writing to correct writing, especially in colleges and universities where the students were virtually unselected. By say 1910 Rhetoric was generally renamed English Composition, or Freshman English. A comprehensive textbook was put together, containing a more popular presentation of the principles of rhetoric, readings from recognized authors illustrating the forms of discourse, and perhaps a section listing rules for correctness. This textbook was often supplemented by a special handbook of rules (Woolley's, then a legion of others), hundreds of rules and subrules, giving the instructor a chance to point to every violation of the law and the student a chance to see that his ways of going wrong were infinite. In many institutions the students were sectioned according to ability, or lack of it. The best writers were either excused from the course or segregated in sections where talent and motivation were high, the middle group settled down to a rather dull time without pacesetters, and the lowest group were a sodden mass, earnest but discouraged, especially if they were sentenced to what was called subfreshman English. Engineered to be more practical and realistic than the old Rhetoric course, this course in Composition tended to be negative, its one serious object being the elimination of errors.

Next an effort was made to infuse something positive into the course through a new kind of readings. The book of readings, instead of being made up of models or illustrations, now contained material, chiefly expository essays, designed to stimulate or "challenge" the student's mind, in the hope that he would find something to write about, perhaps even something he cared to write about. Apparently it was assumed that the student's mind was not being stimulated by instruction in other college subjects or by association with other students. One of the first of such books was published in 1913, edited by H. R. Steeves and F. H. Ristine and named *Representative Essays in Modern Thought: A Basis for Composition*. The introduction stated a now familiar argument: that the course in writing should be based not on exercises or models but on provocative ideas; that the student, instead of writing languidly about trivialities, "discovers, perhaps for the first time, that he has ideas on questions of religion, morals, politics, social conduct, and the like" and learns to write about them with "interest and fluency." In the same year appeared *Essays for College Men: Education, Science and Art*; then came a trickling stream of similar compilations, and, by the 20's and 30's, a flood which has scarcely abated today. If the instructor took the work seriously, he became a teacher of things-in-general. Exceptional if he had interests wide enough to cover religion, politics, social conduct, education, science, art, he was far from exceptional if his knowledge of these fields was scant. As time went on, the material studied became more and more contemporary, more and more journalistic and ephemeral. Sometimes it was arranged in thematic groups to form a pattern; sometimes, as in the "omnibus" volumes, it was frankly miscellaneous and aimless. No collection gave the instructor satisfaction, or the illusion of satisfaction, long, and no collection stimulated enough students to write with enough interest. Partly on this account, emphasis was often shifted to exercises, workbooks, and objective tests, without noticeable improvement in the actual writing. And the problem of the seriously deficient students remained completely unsolved, despite sub-freshman English (with or without credit), supplementary courses following the freshman course, remedial work or "clinics" (required or optional, casual or determined), and plans for enlisting the cooperation of the general faculty. It was grimly recognized that, whatever skill seemed to be learned in the



main writing course or the sideshows, this skill had little or no effect upon the writing done in non-English courses or in the subsequent years of college.

The last chapter in this history of failure brings us up to the present day. During the second world war most American colleges and universities, desiring to manifest an alert response to world-shaking events, reformed the curriculum to give it some semblance of order and purpose, or at least a fresh set of terms. While the usual term for the course in writing continued to be English Composition, a number of institutions signaled what they conceived to be a new attack on the problem by substituting *Communication*. Writing was now one of the communication skills, along with reading, speaking, and sometimes listening. Sometimes the writing skill was dealt with separately, more often perhaps in combination with the others. Combination did not mean integration, however, but rather the packaging of diverse skills in one course. An admired arrangement provided for sections emphasizing respectively writing, reading, and speaking. In the "writing emphasis sections" essentially the same goods were offered — rather than sold — as in the old composition course, so that the element of novelty lay chiefly in window-dressing. The new course claimed greater flexibility, without much reason, since under the old scheme students could be transferred at any time from one section level to another and could meet the requirement in any number of semesters from zero to four, five, or more. With more reason it claimed greater success in the science of diagnosis, postponing however to a somewhat dim future control of the science of curing.

Unlike the previous types of writing courses, the course in written and other communication appears to have originated not among the presumed experts, the English staffs, but among educationists and administrators, men with an abnormal interest in organization, paper patterns, and terminology. "Communication Skills" looked well as a curricular unit preliminary to the "Common Core," that is, to the various "Areas of General Education" which in turn were preliminary to the specialized "Areas of Concentration." Further, such persons were much inclined to believe that success in teaching would at last be attained by scientific method: by exercises and objective tests, by a proliferation of mimeographed materials, by projects carefully advancing step by step, by incessant staff meetings

assuring uniform and exact methodology — by a procedure, in short, that would merit the name of research and lead to educationist theses and monographs. Unfortunately it must be added that persons of this type, having had no experience whatever in teaching writing, necessarily view the problem from the outside; that many of them cannot write readably, that some of them cannot write correctly. They ignore the fact that writing, from the most elementary stage, is an art, and think it may be mastered by science, or the trappings of science. In English departments, where the work must be carried out, the few enthusiasts over communication are not the best minds but generally organizational persons who are placed in charge of the course and easily persuade themselves of their success.

## II

What should the colleges attempt in the future? Before trying to answer we shall do well to place the whole problem in a larger context.

When the high schools failed to teach the young to write acceptably, the colleges conceived it their duty to take over the task. But it was a different task. It was the task of assuring an endurable minimum of correctness and clearness in the writing of only a small proportion of our population. Even if the colleges had succeeded they would not have accomplished what a democracy needs. In a free society the citizens as a whole (not a privileged few) must be articulate, able to communicate, able to write intelligibly. Government is by public opinion, and public opinion is by discussion, and discussion is by reading, speaking, and writing. In a time of global revolution, nothing less than national security is at stake. But even this is too narrow a view. Writing enters, or should enter, into *every* aspect of living, not only civic but also personal and vocational. Constantly facing occasions for written intercourse, the citizen unable to convey facts, ideas, attitudes is unfit "to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices both private and public of Peace and War." Correct and tolerably clear writing is therefore not to be viewed as an aristocratic privilege, an instrument for an elite or ruling class, or for gentlemen and ladies, but rather as a personal right and social need of the common man, of all men and women. It follows that the problem of teaching this skill to the entire population can be solved only by the schools.

The responsibility of the primary and secondary schools seems obvious. Less obvious is the particular standard of writing ability which they must assure. In any event it will be reasonable to say that they are responsible for basic correctness, which is fortunately about as definite as it is in simple arithmetic. Training in the blacks and whites of correctness should come early and be carried to completion early, not endlessly repeated and postponed through the grades, high school, college, and even graduate school.

As a foundation for such training the vast majority of pupils need grammar, whether formal or functional. Only a few pupils coming from a fortunate environment can dispense with a conscious knowledge of syntax, the mutual relations of words in the sentence. Of the three units of writing — the sentence, the paragraph, and the whole — the school pupil must concentrate upon the first. Yet a sentence is not only a syntactical construct but also a thought articulated, formulated in words, made distinct and intelligible to others. Hence sentence correctness is closely allied to sentence clearness, something by no means so definite and amenable to direct instruction. Clearness is indeed the second objective of the school, as it is the second need of the citizen. But the first and basic, to be attained at all costs, is correctness, without which instruction in the more difficult abilities is all but out of the question. If the vast majority of high school graduates emerged able to write correctly, we might risk leaving the more complicated abilities to the effect of maturation and the pressures of living in society. But we cannot risk leaving correctness as well to the workings of these influences, as experience has shown. The result has been a semi-illiteracy unsafe in an advanced democracy in the twentieth century.

As the primary objective, correctness is appropriate to the schools, inappropriate to the college. College marks a break, a new attitude and set of habits for the student. As a time for focusing upon correctness the freshman year is simply too late. In the new environment, grammar, syntax, punctuation, spelling are looked upon as "old stuff," even if they have not been mastered. The minority of students who know almost nothing of correctness can be invited to do some remedial work, which will not be too dull when it is voluntary. Such students are usually weak in all or nearly all subjects. Misplaced in college, they are high school students mistakenly certified as

ready for college work. Most of them should leave college and take a job, as they do.

As for the great majority of students, they know far more about correctness than they use, and the real question is how they can be got to use what they know. This question will perhaps be easier to deal with if we first ask under what conditions they do their worst writing and their best. Worst and best will be taken to involve both correctness and clearness.

Students write their worst, in English or any other course, when they are bored by the task assigned, for example, a theme written impromptu in class on a dull or unsuitable topic, or a theme written at home on the night of a "pep meeting." They write their worst, also, when they know almost nothing about the subject assigned, for example, a history report when they have failed to do the minimum reading on the subject. Obviously no amount of emphasis on correctness can overcome these conditions. *Per contra*, they write their best when they are most interested, care to express and communicate something, and when they have ample knowledge of what they are writing about, clear-mindedly possess their thought. Interest begets knowledge, knowledge begets interest — they work either way. Certainly no student ever wrote well because he was familiar with the rules for correctness. A student can be got to use what he has learned about correctness, it would seem evident, not through any direct attack upon incorrectness in a course concentrating upon writing as such, but through the creation of a situation, a set of conditions, favorable to the development of knowledge and interest. What the best available situation is will be considered presently.

The special concern of the college must be with clearness. Thus the secondary objective of the high school becomes the primary objective of the college. Professing to teach the undergraduate "how to think," the college must assist him to surmount his characteristic vagueness and confusion, his fuzzy and jumbled writing. He must be made aware that his papers and reports are often inchaote — just begun, not finished — and that, even granting correctness of grammar and of information, he has failed to communicate. Inability to communicate is deplorable in any social group, but intolerable in the privileged group who go to college and contribute most of

our national leadership. It works havoc throughout college and in later life. Fortunately, with most students, the process of maturation itself provides a partial remedy. As the mind and personality develop, oral and written communication tend to become clearer, more precise, more firm and assured. In this process all the courses taken by the student, in whatever departments, play or should play a part.

As for the English department, it has something to offer to this end which no other department can be expected to supply so well: training in the clarification of muddled thought, and instruction in the devices that make for clearness. The verbal means of clearness are discussed in all the handbooks of composition, and the old rhetorical principles of unity, coherence, and emphasis, under whatever names they may pass, are constantly kept in view in reading papers in any English course. In a typical handbook are, for instance, such directives as:

"Arrange the ideas within a sentence and a series of sentences according to a logical sequence. Finish one thought before you begin another, and begin the second where you leave off the first."

"Make your transitions clear. Pass from one thought to the next in such a way that there can be no doubt as to what you mean. Repeat a key word or phrase. Choose the exact connective or employ a formal mark of transition (*secondly, on the other hand; next, etc.*) or a pronoun or other reference word."

"Avoid loose and illogical thinking. . . . The expression of a thought may be perfect, but the result unsatisfactory because the thought itself is illogical. This section thus deals with that more general and elusive kind of obscurity which springs ultimately from illogical thinking."

The English department has a special responsibility to teach the devices that make for clearness, and to show concretely how they apply to what the student is trying to communicate. In high school the student learned them, after a fashion, within the compass of the sentence. In college he should learn them, and well, as they concern the sentence, the paragraph, and the whole composition. Yet, paradoxically, he cannot do this by means of a freshman course in which the prime objective is the writing of clear sentences, paragraphs, and compositions.

### III

The way to write clearly is determined by the nature of verbal expression or communication. As Cardinal Newman put it, "Thought and speech are inseparable from each other. Matter and expression are parts of one: style is a thinking out

into language." Similarly, Coleridge observed that organic form "shapes, as it develops itself from within, and the fulness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form. Such as the life is, such is the form." Thought comes to life in words, spoken or written. When written they may be reshaped and refined to a maximum or at least a sufficient clarity, and so recorded for others. Writing exists for reading, which is the passage back to the thought. Always the thought is central, and it follows that the student who would acquire skill in writing sentences, paragraphs, and wholes must focus his attention upon the substance of thought to be communicated.

The futility of a course dedicated to writing has been well stated by a psychologist of the University of Iowa, Wendell Johnson, in an article contributed to the first number of a review of semantics known as *Etc.* This article — "You Can't Write Writing" — merits quotation at some length:

One cannot write writing, any more than one can read reading. One can only write, just as one can only read, history, or geography, or physiology, or some other such subject about which writing can be done. One can, of course, write about writing, but what one writes about writing will have little, if any, significance except insofar as one writes about writing about something else. We have to deal here with a very general, and a very crucial, problem. What is true of reading and writing is true, also, of speaking, or drawing, or painting. It is true of mathematizing. It holds for any kind of symbolizing.

Within the context of writing *about* something instead of just writing, the devices for clearness take on a practical meaning. Thus Professor Johnson says of the making of transitions:

Even those who have been taught how to lay beads in a row have not been taught how to string them. Just as the order of what one writes is determined by the order of the parts or events involved in what one is writing about, so the ways in which transitions are made in the writing are determined by the ways in which the parts or events are related in the realities one is describing, narrating, or explaining. The ability to move from one sentence or paragraph or chapter to the next, in such a way as to blend them into a unified whole, is largely dependent upon an understanding of the reasons for going from one to the next, of why one statement should follow another instead of the reverse, of why one should say "It follows, then," rather than "But." And these reasons are found in the character of the relations existing among the details of that about which the writing is being done. This becomes obvious to one who is not trying to write writing, but who is attempting, rather, to write-about-something-for-someone.

What is said in these passages should be obvious. Yet it is disregarded in all courses in composition or communication in which the student is made to feel that the subject of the course, like its title, is writing, and that his task consists essentially in writing writing. This can happen, and does happen, even when time and effort are bestowed on reading supposed to stimulate thought. Whatever thought and knowledge are presented by the student must remain secondary. The end aimed at is still writing, not saying something about something. The only way to avoid placing primary emphasis upon writing is to place primary emphasis on something else: a subject matter to be written about. In advanced electives in composition, whenever they are successful, the students have subject matter and audience, "write - about - something - for - someone."

Now, there is a subject matter to be written about, or capable of being written about, in every other course taken by the student: history, sociology, botany, even mathematics. This fact has suggested to some persons the desirability of abandoning the writing course and, instead, placing the English department in control of written communication in all college courses. Presumably the student's paper in history would receive two grades, one for its substance, one for its use of the English language. To this jerry-built solution there is a fundamental objection. It would attempt to sunder what the nature of things has fused. The facts and ideas that make up the substance cannot be separated from the words through which they are conveyed. As we have seen, matter and expression are parts of one, and writing is an organic process. A student who has written a history paper which is a jumble of words has not written good history, even if he seems to have used many facts, just as a student who has written an English "theme" which is vague or infantile in substance has not written good English, even if he has conformed to the handbook rules for correctness and clearness. Two grades make no sense; an average of two grades makes no sense.

Other objections to this improvisation will readily occur. One is that scholar-teachers in English, as in other subjects, desire to teach a subject and cannot be expected to have a deep interest in an ancillary function. Handicapped in estimating the clearness of writing in fields of learning where they are not at home, they will be deficient in knowledge as well

as interest. Again, such a plan would relieve the entire faculty, save only the English department, from a responsibility which they share with the English department: that of doing all they can do, while the English department is doing all it can do, to teach students thinking-writing.

Since writing is not a subject but an aspect of every subject, the only rational solution, as leaders in the field of English increasingly recognize, is abandonment of the course in writing and substitution of all-faculty responsibility. The least that professors of history, sociology, botany should do is to base their grading on total performance, not merely on the amount of information set forth or hinted at in a paper. If this were the uniform practice, students would soon try habitually to write clearly, in all courses for four years and not alone within "English 1-2." The most that the general faculty could be expected to do is to include in their critical comments on papers remarks on the quality of writing. The first (the least) they can and should undertake at once, regardless of what may be done by the English department. The second (the most) they should undertake at once if they are competent, as a considerable proportion of them are. A few teachers may go even farther: not content with critical comments, they will adopt clear writing as one of the declared objectives of their courses. This has been done, for example, even in a course on Elementary Mathematical Analysis, at the University of Minnesota:

The students are told at the outset that one of the things that they are definitely supposed to gain from the course is the ability to read and write and speak correct English. One difficulty in teaching composition in an English class is that, while students there are often [?] possessed with a great yearning to say something, they often lack anything very definite to say. In mathematics, on the other hand, statements of theorems and definitions and proofs and descriptions of results furnish excellent material for exact statement. . . . One of the amazing and encouraging discoveries in teaching the course is that students can and do learn to scrutinize their language, once they understand that it matters whether they do so or not. It is the invariable experience that the first examinations produce the expected immature, incoherent, and often ridiculous statements, while at the end of the course the majority of students write like logical persons who have something to say.<sup>1</sup>

Allowing for possible excess of enthusiasm, this report of experience suggests what a faculty could accomplish if it vitally

<sup>1</sup>R. W. Brink, "A Course in Mathematics for the Purposes of General Education," *Journal of General Education*, July 1947.



concerned itself with clear communication. Unhappily, however, faculties as we have them are not likely to prove gifted in direct instruction in writing. Too many professors are unprepared to give advice on the attainment of clearness, or even correctness. Too many of them appear themselves to be unable to write with ordinary skill.

Reliance upon faculty responsibility alone would be premature. There is still need of the special services which can be rendered by the department of English. There is still need of a course in English required of all students. The question remains, what sort of course?

Since it cannot be a course in writing writing, it must be one in writing on a subject, and that subject must be one in which the English department is most competent and most interested. The subject is literature, a subject vital in any program of general education. Instead of a year of writing writing followed by a year of study of literature, what is needed is a two-year course in literature and in writing about it. The literature should be masterpieces, so far as possible English and American masterpieces, though translations from Greek, for example, can hardly be neglected. The writing should be on topics growing out of discussion of the masterpieces—it need not be “bookish” but may relate the human values of the works to modern and local and personal experience. The reading and the writing will complement and fructify each other. Reading is more observant and interested when writing is to be based on it, and writing encourages the student to reflect upon his ideas till he has brought them to realization in crystallized expression. Furthermore, if the classroom periods are devoted to discussion of literature—that is, the experience of human life it portrays and the values of living which it emotionally symbolizes—a situation arises naturally in which the student’s acquirement of both knowledge and interest is facilitated. While miracles are not to be expected, the quality of the student’s compositions will be heightened by two years of reading, thinking, and writing as it cannot be in one year of writing writing.

Here is a sound means of writing *about* something, but what of writing *for* someone? If rhetoric involves, as Raphael Demos has put it, content, addressor, and addressee, who, in a college course, is the addressee? First and mainly, the instructor. There

can always be an audience of one, as in letter-writing; only, the instructor, in addition to being a single friendly person who replies by commenting in writing or in conference, takes on a representative character, standing for a large if undefined group of intelligent readers. Furthermore, if specimen papers are discussed in class, the student is aware that what he writes may reach a larger audience — his immediate associates in education. And he may reach a still larger audience if the college makes provision for a magazine of writing done in the course (call this, if you must, a "laboratory") or if it can arrange to have students heard over the radio. These larger publics have been reached in some institutions, but the instructor and the class are audience enough, as experience has shown.

Granted that such a course seems based on a sound theory of the writing process, yet the fear will linger, in some quarters, that it cannot guarantee "correctness." The educationist mind is likely to affirm, with the bland assurance of inexperience, that if you want the student to write correctly the only thing to do is to teach him to write correctly. Many college administrators and faculty members, without giving much thought to the problem, would be found to agree. But there is ample evidence to show that students taught to write correctly do not write correctly. Every such effort has come to an impasse. Every device of teaching methods has failed. In its usual terms the problem is completely insoluble, since the terms are false. The true terms are well known to professional writers, especially those who have kept close to colleges and watched their ways. In an article on "Robert Frost as Teacher"<sup>2</sup> the director of the Bread Loaf School of English has reported Mr. Frost's thought on this point:

Trying to correct all the grammatical errors simply wastes valuable time. It reminds him [Mr. Frost] of a bad dream in which he found himself trying to inflate a big balloon from the outside rather than by blowing from within. The teacher cannot do his task by force but only by addressing himself to the student's spirit, will, and intellect. The only way to get the student to write precisely is, he believes, to get him to think accurately. The only correction that amounts to any thing is addressed to the student's thought. "You can't pump out mistakes," he remarks crisply.

The best way to teach writing to beginning college students was the subject of a questionnaire sent from the University of

<sup>2</sup>By Reginald L. Cook, in *Collegiate English*, February 1947.

Iowa to departments of English in seventeen representative state universities, private universities, and colleges: Colorado, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio State, North Carolina, Chicago, Northwestern, Cornell, Columbia, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Amherst, Grinnell. The persons addressed were ordinarily heads of departments, many of whom referred the question to the chairmen of the freshmen course in writing. The question was not what plan the institution was following, but the plan that seemed *best* among various stated possibilities, with blank space for others. In the replies no other plans were offered, and no votes were cast for these:

"A drill course in writing, aiming primarily at the elimination of errors."

"A more positive course in writing, aiming primarily at clearness."

"A course having its subject matter in another department or other departments, the English department being concerned only with correctness and clearness in the written work."

Of sixteen replies received, four were *for* a course in writing with considerable time devoted to class discussion of readings. Twelve were *against* a course in writing, even when qualified in this way, voting either for equal attention to reading and writing or for dominant attention to reading:

"A course in both reading and writing, in which the two are regarded as about equally important." 7 votes.

"A course in literature — great books, or English literature, or American literature, etc. — in which there is instruction in writing and considerable practice in writing." 5 votes. (2 state universities, 2 private universities, 1 college).

Thus the net result was that three-fourths of the replies opposed a course aiming primarily at writing,<sup>8</sup> and nearly one-third designated as the best solution a course in literature, even though scarcely any English departments in the nation had such a course in operation. English departments generally regard a course of this kind as ruled out by the prevailing attitude of administrators and faculties. That so large a proportion of the votes were for a course in literature including instruction in writing is indeed surprising, in view of the fact that, the length of the course not having been indicated, it

<sup>8</sup>Strong opposition was voiced by Oscar James Campbell, of Columbia, who remarked that "any attempt to teach a student how to write in a course devoted to that purpose alone is futile and indeed a dishonest educational regimen," on the ground that it gives the freshman the notion that "writing is a thing in itself."

was assumed to cover one year only. In other words, the belief was registered that even a single year of literature with writing subordinated would accomplish more for writing than a course devoted to writing. It is safe to infer that two years would have been viewed as offering the English department a more adequate opportunity.<sup>4</sup>

A few words may be worth adding on the stand taken in the Harvard Report of 1945. Deploring "segregating training in writing from the fields of learning," the report goes on to say:

Since the responsibility for training in written communication is vested in the staff of English A, the other members of the faculty too often feel that they have little if any responsibility for the development of skill and facility in writing. This seems to us a serious weakness. What is desired is not primarily skill in writing literary English or about English literature. Training in composition should not be associated with the English department only. It should be functional to the curriculum, a significant part of the student's college experience.

Here is a clear-minded realization that "English A" and freshman writing courses elsewhere have failed and must fail, that it was a mistake to delegate to English departments a function belonging to the entire faculty, and that the faculty should resume its proper work — all instructors in general education (why not in special education as well?) should "share in the task" as soon as possible. Since it is not possible now, the report turns to the problem what should be done in the interim, and offers a proposal unsound both theoretically and practically, in the light of what has been said in the present chapter.

The proposal is to reduce freshman composition to a one-term remedial course, a sort of subfreshman English, and in the second semester to have the freshmen's writing in their general education "course or courses" "directed and corrected by the instructors in composition," who would hold "conferences with each student on each theme." The last provision sounds generous, till it is noted that the conferee may enjoy conferences on only the few papers he writes in one-half of a single general education course. This would seem a cavalier treatment of the problem even at an institution like Harvard,

<sup>4</sup>A curriculum report of the College English Association (*News Letter of the CEA*, March 1946), after recommending abolition of both freshman composition and the sophomore survey of English literature, specifically called for a course on literary masterpieces running through two years.

if Mr. Conant is correct in his estimate of the writing done by graduates. Furthermore, the committee, having started by deploring "segregating training in writing from the fields of learning," has ended by leaving it completely segregated, since the training in the half course is done by the English staff. Thus the committee has rejected its best opportunity to relate training in writing with at least one field of learning, the field of the course on Great Texts of Literature (*sic*; why not "Texts of Great Literature"?), in which the staff teaching literature would have been well qualified to teach writing about literature. And by abandoning the half-year remedial course in writing, the committee could have extended the great literature course to a year and a half or two years, to the advantage of the teaching of both literature and writing.

## A Clinical Speech Program at the College Level

SINCE the time of the first world war there has been a steadily growing recognition of the significance of the fact that speech defectives constitute our largest single group of handicapped citizens. The most conservative estimate that one would care to defend is that 5 percent of elementary and secondary pupils have serious speech impairments. Another 5 percent, at least, have peculiarities of voice, articulation, and speech fluency that are designated as "minor defects." Whether or not they are minor in their consequences depends on many factors, particularly the pupil's vocational goals, social situation, and his general level of personal and social adjustment, his ability to live comfortably and effectively with a comparatively minor defect.

Under prevailing conditions scarcely 10 percent of these children receive remedial speech training; few of them "out-grow" their defects. This means that the vast majority reach college age still characterized by impaired speech. If the proportion of college freshmen who have speech defects is somewhat below the proportion of public school pupils who have such disorders, the reason lies chiefly in the fact that defective speech discourages many high school graduates from attempting college work. This point is made the more impressive by the fact that by and large there is no significant relationship between intelligence and defectiveness—or excellence—in voice, articulation, and speech fluency.

The relevant statistics for the college population are striking, however, in spite of the number of otherwise qualified high school graduates with speech defects who do not go on to college. The facts are that while the proportion of public school pupils classified as speech handicapped runs from 5 to 10 percent, the proportion of college freshmen so classified falls

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between 4 and 8 percent. These figures are conservative and cover both severe and mild, though significant, cases. They do not include cases of regional and foreign dialect and the general run of stagefright problems. (A recent survey of University of Iowa students revealed that only 10 percent claimed to have no stagefright at all, while 10 percent rated themselves as having a severe grade of stagefright.)

During the past several years speech and voice examinations have been administered to all entering students at the University of Iowa. In the first semester of the present academic year, 120, or approximately 8 percent, of about 1,500 students in the communication skills program are receiving remedial speech instruction. Of these, 50 have problems of severe grade, requiring intensive individualized clinical attention. The others are dealt with either in small homogeneous groups taught by speech correctionists, or in their regularly scheduled classes conducted by instructors who have had one or more courses in speech pathology and who are supervised by the speech correction staff so far as the limited remedial speech training they undertake to give is concerned.

In addition, the university speech clinic provides remedial service for some 40 students who are not in the communication skills program. There are 35 stutterers in the clinic; of these, roughly three-fourths are regularly enrolled students in the university. Speech defective students who are not enrolled in Communication Skills are not required to attend the speech clinic. The number actually being handled constitute about 1.5 percent of the total enrollment of the university. The best estimate one might make is that the total number of speech defectives on the campus comprises between 3 and 5 percent of the enrollment.

These statements are noteworthy chiefly for the service they perform in indicating the scope of the problem. From a practical point of view it is a big problem. Particularly is it a big problem to overlook or to disregard.

At the college level the problem has three main aspects. The first is that of providing adequate speech correction for the students who need it — and for those who do need it the college has little, if anything, to offer that can compare in value with effective speech correction. To hold that this implies a responsibility to be met by some other agency is to

assume the obligation of specifying the "other agency," and of bringing it into an effective working relationship with the students concerned. To deny this obligation is simply to refuse to recognize the plain fact that the educative process is handicapped, from the point of view of the college, and impaired, from the point of view of the student, by a disorder of speech. Only an unenlightened — or irresponsible — administrator can meet this factual situation with a shrug of the shoulders.

In most midwestern universities speech correction is provided, at least in some measure, for speech-handicapped students. In some institutions academic credit is granted for speech correction. At the University of Iowa the department of speech offers a course, Individual Instruction in the Speech Clinic, in which a speech-handicapped student may earn up to four semester hours of credit. This may most reasonably be regarded as an official recognition of the importance of effective speech in relation to the functional value of a "good education." The implied educational philosophy is becoming more and more widespread; speech correction service to students is coming to be provided in more and more colleges and universities throughout the country — even in some of those in which an official conservative traditionalism has militated against a liberating appreciation of students' individual needs and potentialities.

The second aspect of the problem at the college level is that of teacher training. Any college responsive to the social matrix in which it functions is necessarily sensitive to the rapidly growing demand for speech correction workers. The teacher shortage in this professional area, not only in public schools and hospitals but in the training centers as well, is so great that, with such expansion of college training programs as may reasonably be anticipated, it will be at least twenty years before a sufficient supply of speech correction workers will be forthcoming. The American Speech and Hearing Association has set up, and is continuously reviewing, standards of professional training and practice in this field, and any competent college or university administrator will, as a matter of course, familiarize himself with these standards. Training in speech pathology at the Ph.D. level is provided in a number of universities, at the M.A. level in a larger number of institutions, and at the B.A. level in a still larger number.



Insofar as it is a proper function of a college to train the instructional and professional personnel demanded and required by our society, there is no clear ground on which the failure of a college to train speech correction workers may be defended. True speech correction is a relatively new profession and the need for professional training programs, as well as their substantial definition, have not been clearly apparent until quite recently. The fact is that the colleges of this country, particularly in the middle west, are responding in a very considerable measure to the indicated social need.

Events that transpired in the course of World War II had a very stimulating effect in this connection. What happened is partially symbolized by one of the writer's experiences early in 1941. At an informal gathering on the west coast about six months before Pearl Harbor, the writer engaged — or attempted to engage — a Naval captain of relatively advanced age in conversation concerning the policy of the United States Navy with respect to men suffering from psychoneuroses and other forms of mental and emotional disturbance. The only answer that could be drawn out of the captain was one which later developments proved to be even more fantastic than it appeared at the time: "There are no such men in the United States Navy."

As America's horde of young men began to descend upon the induction centers — and to find their way to assignment officers and medical personnel within the armed services — the responsible officials quickly learned that an alarming proportion of our youth did not meet — or subsequently maintain — the standards of physical and emotional fitness set up by the military forces. They discovered how naively unrealistic such old school officers as our proud captain actually were.

Our proud captain is most significant to us at the moment, however, as a ludicrous symbol of all too many college presidents and deans, particularly in the older institutions where a distracting preoccupation with abstract definitions of "the educated man" preclude an effective recognition of individual differences among students. There are still ivory-tower hermits who actually think that there are no maladjusted or neurotic students, and no candidates for degrees who are hard of hearing, partially seeing, or speech handicapped, in the "better" colleges. If they can be so absurdly unperceptive and mistaken on this

matter, it is to be seriously considered that their judgment concerning the general relationship of the individual student to the educative process might be gravely impaired. It is hardly to be expected, at least, that they might be capable of exercising the qualities of educational statesmanship required of administrators faced with adapting college programs to genuine and pressing social needs. The need for thousands of adequately trained specialists to deal effectively with America's millions of speech-handicapped children and adults is one of these.

Training for speech correction workers calls for a strong basic program in general education, supplemented by a professional curriculum which necessarily cuts across traditional departmental barriers. A speech correctionist cannot be a relatively uneducated specialist. To deal adequately with a speech defect is to deal adequately with the person who has it, and usually with his family, school, and community. One who does this inevitably works in close coordination with social workers, physicians, psychologists, and other professional specialists. These remarks should be sufficient to indicate the need for a considerable segment of general education in the training program for speech correction workers.

The professional aspects of the training program include a base made up of courses in psychology and speech, on which rests an extensive series of laboratory, clinical, and didactic courses ranging from physiology and anatomy to cultural anthropology and abnormal psychology, and including clinical training courses concerned with each of the types of disordered speech.

The third aspect of the problem at the college level is that of research. Speech correction is a comparatively new field and it is burgeoning with new hypotheses and clinical hunches. It is a field in which a professional training program minus a laboratory is an anachronism. There is not a single textbook in the field, including the most recent ones, that is sufficiently up-to-date to be used without supplementation by recent research and clinical findings. Any student who does not receive an effective experimental orientation cannot be depended upon to be an adept clinician even during the brief period that will elapse before his textbooks and lecture notes will become obsolete.

These considerations have nothing to do with any abstract distinctions that may be drawn, in certain areas, between the

undergraduate and the graduate college. Even an adequate undergraduate training program in speech correction cannot be carried on in the absence of a research program — or at least a vigorous research attitude on the part of the instructional staff. It is clearly a field in which, indeed, a fool is one who knows all the answers and none of the questions. On the graduate level, of course, a professional training program in the absence of adequate laboratory facilities and competent research personnel is unthinkable.

These, then, are a few of the basic considerations to be evaluated by any student of higher education, or any college or university administrator, who is sensitive to the fundamental importance of speech — and therefore the significance of speech disorders — in relation to the educative process. They are considerations to be pondered by anyone concerned with the problem of making our institutions of higher learning increasingly effective in meeting the significant needs of their students and of the society which they serve. The capacity to speak is the most distinctively human of all human characteristics. We speak far more than we read and greatly more than we write. Speech, and speech correction, are to be accorded correspondingly prominent positions in any adequate structure of higher education.

## Graduate Work for Teachers of Communication

THE PRESENT concern for the quality of college teaching is leading in two directions, toward more careful and more personal induction of young teachers ("inservice training") and toward some modification of the graduate program from one of pure research and amassing of information to one that will combine research with some work directly pointed to future teaching. Some schools of education are moving toward precollege training, but (no doubt in part to offset this trend) the "subject-matter departments" are discussing ways and means at their meetings and a few courses are already being developed that are distinctly preprofessional. It seems clear that, whatever the method will be, not so much will be left to trial and error as in the past.

Since the more elementary communication (and composition and speech) courses are obviously a part of general education, it would be a mistake to develop elaborate programs of great specialization for them. Graduate work in speech in recent years has probably contributed more to the advanced and relatively specialized courses than to the elementary work, and sometimes, like specialization in all other departments, seems to foster an impatience with the beginning courses. In my opinion the expression arts can profit from association with a subject-matter field, though this certainly need not be English literature. Speech, for instance, seems to have more profitable affiliation with the social studies. We need in our field teachers with a variety of backgrounds and a variety of information along with a basic interest in and some training in the arts of communicating knowledge, ideas, feelings to others. In addition, then, to some major field of study and to active experience in oral and/or written expression, preferably both in college courses and outside, what could

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prospective teachers of communication profitably find in their graduate work?

They could be introduced to a somewhat mature perspective on the field of their future work. In a course or two they could be brought in touch with the various fields that bear on communication, at points and in terms that do bear on it rather than in the context of a different discipline. They could get some fundamental information and, perhaps even more important, could be shown how they could continue their self-education and where in the university they could find a systematic amplification of some of the topics. The information we most badly need just now lies outside the usual purviews of speech or English departments.

### A COURSE IN TEACHING COMPOSITION

What follows is a somewhat glorified account of one man's experimental, exploratory attempt to construct such a course, currently English 247 at the University of Washington. This statement includes the main divisions of the course, a suggestion of the approach to each and some of the subtopics, and usually one or two possible sources of material, first-level works that will lead to more detailed studies; but it is not a complete syllabus of either topics or assignments. Because of the instructor's background and preoccupation, it is a development of *rhetoric* and is in fact called Introduction to Rhetorical Studies. It is directed specifically to the teaching of written composition, though this of course cannot be separated from other modes of communication. The numbered headings are the main blocks of the course as given in 1948-49, differing from those of 1947-48 and presumably from those of future years.

#### 1. *Rhetoric as a field of study*

We do not need to be quite so skittish of *rhetoric* as a term, abused in theory and practice though it has been, for at its best it still refers to the principles and arts of verbal communication. (There is no reason why it should be made to cover also the sophistic and plain lying that has always constituted so much of discourse.) Ignoring here the parallel study of oral communication, the field is defined for written composition by the activities that are its concern: the processes of writing and the analysis, description, and evalu-

ation of qualities of what is written; and by its usual or possible subdivisions, the stages in composition, types of writing, purposes, effects on readers, style, and so on.

The history of rhetoric furnishes a natural background for looking at present doctrine and practice. Speech departments have done well to keep Aristotle's *Rhetoric* current, though at the same time it has proved something of a limitation because of too great reliance on its teachings. But some knowledge of the ancient doctrine, from the original documents or, to save time, from a compendium like Charles Sears Baldwin's *Ancient Rhetoric and Poetic*, is useful for its suggestiveness and for showing where modern knowledge must amplify and modify. There seems little reason for pursuing the ups and downs of the discipline through the centuries, but we do need to be aware of the recently dominant doctrines against which we are reacting, the relatively static nineteenth century rhetoric of the four forms of discourse in written composition and of elocution and voice and diction in speech. This can do something to make our rebellion intelligent and give us a consciousness of what we are doing and need to do to recover lost ground, to proceed to an active and behavioristic rhetoric for today.

## 2. *The activity of writing*

Since communication is a process, systematic consideration of it must be based on a knowledge, as detailed as we can muster, of the activities involved. For written composition there is much raw material: the notebooks of writers (Henry James, Chekhov, Gerard Manley Hopkins); accounts of the writing of specific works, from the prefaces of Henry James up and down; letters (Flaubert) and autobiographies (Lincoln Steffens) by the score; interviews (Robert Van Gelder's *Writers and Writing*) and many short narratives and comments scattered in books and periodicals. There seem to be more for imaginative than for factual writing, though there are the *Saturday Evening Post* case histories of articles and a good bit from historians, foreign correspondents, and free lance writers. There are many secondary studies—*The Road to Xanadu*, *Poets at Work*, Graham Wallas' *The Art of Thought*, and much can be gained from the internal evidence of books and articles and stories. It is obvious that our teaching should not contradict the satisfactory prac-

tices of professional writers, as much elementary rhetoric actually does, and should approach them so far as the limitations of the classroom and university life permit. There is a good deal of variation, of course, but the processes can be broken down into typical stages that allow for concentration on various problems one at a time.

Since this is principally a mental activity, we need good grounding, as good as the science currently affords, in psychology. Although every institution has plenty of courses in this subject, and even in its applied branches, they do not usually touch our work directly. Teachers in our field are likely to go in rags here, often thinking in terms of faculty psychology long outmoded, or else being under the spell of some fragment of the science, such as psychoanalysis or what is embedded in general semantics. We need a blend of the profitable doctrine from the current schools, which in general reinforce each other, of behaviorism, psychoanalysis, gestalt, and what else. As psychologists react against their own overemphasis, they become more fruitful, as gestalt at the moment stresses a complexity lacking in associationism. Gardner Murphy's *Personality — A Biosocial Approach to Origins and Structure* is an especially convenient book for us at present, because it offers a synthesis from the various doctrines in a context of the whole person and his society, and because it furnishes a guide to more specific works with valuable points for the activity of communication.

### 3. *Related fields of study*

There are several fields besides psychology with which we need to work closely and toward which a teacher needs orientation. In these days in which students are expected to "integrate" the key methods and materials of various disciplines, it is first necessary for the teachers to do a little integrating.

Since most composition and many communication courses fall within English departments and will be taught at least in part by people with training in "English," it is important to consider the relations between the teaching of literature and of expression. The relation to the historical study of literature that has dominated so long is indeed slight and limited almost to the stimulation received from the really important writers. The relation to a critical approach, es-

pecially when applied to recent literature, is closer and can be valuable in reinforcing self-criticism and giving an awareness of current styles and forms. But perhaps most useful is an emphasis on the immediate contribution of literature to individual understanding and feeling—the goal of normal reading which is too often forgotten by professional readers who turn to literature for various ulterior purposes. Louise M. Rosenblatt's *Literature as Exploration* presents an approach that will harmonize with communication because it contributes to the natural and complex growth of personality, as does a study of the expression arts. A practical application of this topic is that graduate students may be encouraged to look for a field in literature (as in contemporary literature or a type that interests them) that will actually support and enrich their work in composition, and so face the job market with two strings to their bow and with an integrated instead of divided equipment within the field of "English."

A similar approach to the other arts is desirable and actual participation in one or more, even if amateurish, will broaden and deepen their understanding of communication. A full understanding of communication without some sense of the diverse appeals and methods of music, painting, and drama is not likely. The theoretical approaches to the arts have suffered from the voluminous, contradictory, and generally funereal works of aesthetics, but there are various more naturalistic and more human approaches now available, as in Irwin Edman's *Arts and the Man*, Norman C. Meier's *Art in Human Affairs*, and the comparative presentation of Stephen C. Pepper's *The Basis of Criticism in the Arts*. But more important is an immediate acquaintance with symphonies, sculpture, plays, buildings themselves and reflection upon their effects and the activities that produce them. There are plenty of courses in most institutions to furnish some background and experience, but nothing can take the place of an individual's interest and sensitiveness in the various arts.

In philosophy our need is not so much for specialties like aesthetics and logic as for a general understanding of the principal modes of interpreting nature that have always withstood historical times been more or less current. An individual teacher needs to know where he stands, the strength and shortcomings of his point of view, and its relation to other views.



He is criticizing the thought of others and should be able to see it in a genuine perspective. A corollary is some understanding of scientific thinking and its implications in naturalistic philosophy, its sturdy foundation and its shortcomings. Students who have objected to taking a brief flier in philosophy early in the course have later been surprised to find that the chief discrepancies in class evaluations of even a very elementary set of themes have come from the widely differing philosophies (or attitudes) of the readers. Bringing these out into the open will in the long run do more to further some commensurate judgment of papers than any number of arguments about the seriousness of comma faults. An easy survey of the principal traditions of thought is available in Irwin Edman's *Four Ways of Philosophy*, which could be followed up by other naturalistic works or works in other traditions.

#### 4. *Reading audiences and the channels of communication*

Since communication is a social activity or nothing, some familiarity with the social studies is imperative. These are so generously developed in most institutions and usually so popular that students will have had some of the general courses at least. But they may be left at a level of theory — or of undigested fact — and not see their relation to work in composition. Some sociology departments have courses in communication, and others in propaganda and public opinion or the influence of "the press." These areas need to be related definitely to our work, to aid in discrimination of types of reading and listening audiences, the functions of individual, group, and mass communication, and the channels of communication as arts and industries. We can hardly know too much about newspapers, magazines, books, radio, motion pictures, advertising. We need also to know much more about the reading audience, so much harder to find and to assess than the audience of a speech.

There is a steady stream of books in this field, from moderately popular ones like Walter Lippmann's *The Phantom Public* and Morris Ernst's *The First Freedom* to more basic works like Leonard W. Doob's *Popular Opinion and Propaganda* and Zechariah Chafee's *Free Speech in the United States*. The trade journals (*Editor and Publisher*, *Variety*, *Printer's Ink*) bring us closer to the channels themselves in their business and institutional aspects. There is not yet

enough available about the audience response to either literature or propaganda, or about the social conditioning of readers.

Besides these obviously professional topics, the teacher needs to have a more than average understanding of the social scene, in part because so much student material deals with it and demands some background for evaluation, and in part to keep his own perspective clear and to prevent him from falling prey to the isms of the moment. American history, especially the social, economic, political, and intellectual trends of recent years, is naturally important. And for more complete perspective there are social psychology and anthropology, with books like Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* and, for a more philosophical view, George H. Mead's *Mind, Self and Society*.

#### 5. *Language*

The current language, as a medium of communication, is so close to the center of our work that prospective teachers need whole courses in it. But their professional approach has some special phases and belongs in a course of this sort. Some notion of "the symbolic process" as we call it these days, of standards of usage in carrying on public affairs and those that are appropriate for cultivation in general and special courses, perspective upon the various brands of semantics, discriminating among dictionaries, the relative unreliability of most "error counts," and a functional approach to grammar are among the needed topics. A major point is to show them how and where to find responsible and authoritative discussions of debatable points of usage, since the majority of teachers are still so uninformed about their language that they are at the mercy of the often quite unrealistic pronouncements of the handbooks. Looking at the spoken and written modes of the language together — now happily no longer so different as they were a generation ago — gives strength to both. The possible reference field is large: some acquaintance with Curme, Jespersen, and other proper authorities; Hayakawa or Hugh Walpole or Wendell Johnson (*People in Quandaries*) for elementary semantics; reference books like Marckwardt and Walcott's *Facts About English Usage* and Robert C. Pooley's *Teaching English Usage* for immediately applicable discussions of debatable locutions.

## 6. *Rhetorical analysis*

Since a part of the work of teaching is in analysis of papers for description, for focusing criticism on various parts or qualities, or for general evaluation, some guide to analysis is necessary. Unity, coherence, and emphasis no longer seem enough. In the late nineteenth century "rhetorical analysis" was a stock title for a course and it might well be revived with the advantage of more complex methods, though analysis should not become an end in itself. A possible skeleton of topics to explore is:

Identification and classification of the work (its type), with indication of its scope and content, and of possible works for comparison

Stated or implied purposes

Reader direction, the intended audience, the degree of adaptation to and contact with the audience, and known or possible effects

Method, the work of composition with success or failure in any of the various stages (such as adequacy and use of sources)

Organization — stages, movement, continuity

Traits of style — in the specific qualities of words, sentences, and so on

Writer's attitude (realism, humor, satire)

Tradition of thought represented — the philosophical background and the responsibility and integrity of statement as the basis for evaluation of substance.

Only those topics should be considered for a particular piece that are of importance to it, but those that have some validity should be explored, described, and evaluated. The basis for a judgment would usually be the appropriateness of the elements to the situation being met by the writer.

## 7. *Pedagogical topics*

Some time should be saved for specifically pedagogical topics, some distributed among the earlier divisions of the course, and others added toward the end. This can be done without letting it become a course in "methods," as it is not likely to be against the background that has been sketched here. The list of points is almost endless but should include as a minimum: assignments of papers, the types most appro-

priate for practice at different levels; the criticism of papers, including some practice in "reading themes"; the possible variety of courses, elementary and advanced, and observable trends today; tests and testing; attempts at insuring "proficiency" after the required courses; reading and readings; textbooks; audio-visual aids; and so on. Here there is a mass of articles and pamphlets, many of which can be reached through the bibliography in Jessie Howard and Charles W. Roberts, *The Problem of English Composition in American Colleges and Universities* (1941); Edna Hays, *The College Teaching of English, A Bibliography 1941-1944*, and Miss Hays' continuation of this in the May issue of *College English*. There can be plenty of specific assignments in analyzing college catalogs, course syllabi, textbooks, and in gathering news of particular devices from courses. And as an agreeable backdrop there are three chapters in Jacques Barzun's *Teacher in America*: (4) How to Write and Be Read, (5) How to Read and Be Right, and (11) The Classics Off the Shelf.

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Obviously this is a sort of survey course, more concerned with opening up subjects and lines of thought than with completing or "covering" them. Many of the readings are purposely introductory and even popular, leaving some of the more lofty and seminal tomes for a continuing seminar. At least such a course can set up some headings under which the individual can classify his experience and accumulate further material. It can provide some clues for further pursuit of the topics by suggestion and by a mimeographed bibliography. At the moment breadth of view and perspective seem to be more important than minute specialization. Other patterns of courses are possible and desirable, for the worst thing that could happen in our field would be to establish an orthodoxy, or competing orthodoxies: further experiment and much more variety than now exists in composition work are both desirable. There is opportunity for more detailed studies, as masters' and doctors' theses, to toss into the hopper relatively disinterested and thorough investigations of various aspects of the work, to supplement and perhaps offset the this-is-what-we-do-so-successfully papers now current.

Many English departments will take the point of view that this is not fit subject matter for them, that it is "school of education stuff." Those making this statement are usually most eloquent in denouncing the works of these same schools of education. But the work is needed — and who is more likely to do it well than those in the fields of English and speech most closely concerned with it? In the near-bankruptcy of graduate work in English this sort of thing seems a really useful task and one way (only one of several ways) of giving it new meaning. It appeals to many students who know that a part of their future work will be in composition or communication and to those few who see it as their chief interest, from among whom will probably come some specialists to furnish the leadership in future years.

People with a professional attitude, well aware of the complexity of their job, of its close relation to other fields of knowledge, conscious of the necessity of the cooperation of minds of many types and with varied trainings should lead to more teaching with purpose and effect. Future teachers of composition and communication have a right to expect their graduate program to make some contribution to that work, at least to help lay a foundation upon which they can continue to build.

## Self-Realization, Communication, and Aesthetic Experience

SELF-REALIZATION is the goal of life. This has always been so. Plato and Thomas Aquinas, Francis Bacon, Emerson and Dewey are all explicit on this point. But for each, drawing on a different reservoir of knowledge and interacting with a different pattern of social relationships based on different technologies, self-realization is a very different value. Along with other key words pertinent to it — "home," "salvation," "democracy" — whose expanding meanings symbolize the enlarging design of local-global relationships, the meaning of self-realization is shifting from "accomplished end" to "life-long process." Even within the past eight years of war and reconstruction this trend is obvious. At the Second Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion in 1942, Margaret Mead implied that self-realization was dependent on "the increase in appreciation of the supreme worth and moral responsibility of every individual person."<sup>1</sup> In 1948 Harry A. Overstreet, at the Eighth Conference, called at once more broadly and more pointedly for "rethinking the goal of individual life" with concern for a "philosophy of maturity" as guide to the process of creating "a world of new minds, with a new outlook upon human relations."<sup>2</sup>

Broad field courses in humanities and the newer courses and programs in communication, themselves a product of postwar, depression, and wartime stocktaking of our values, have a unique function in the development of a consciously held philosophy of maturity. In comparable courses in the natural sciences and social sciences, each individual to the limits of his readiness can share in the values and skills of man's

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<sup>1</sup>Margaret Mead, "The Comparative Study of Culture and the Purposeful Cultivation of Democratic Values," in *Science, Philosophy and Religion: A Symposium*, New York, 1942, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup>Harry A. Overstreet, "Next: To Build A New Outlook," in *Learning and World Peace: A Symposium* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), p. 215.

accumulated experience through the symbolic systems peculiar to each area of specialization. He can realize, with Cassirer, that in each endeavor, man designs "a symbolic universe that enables him to understand and interpret, to articulate and organize, to synthesize and universalize his human experience."<sup>8</sup> But it is in philosophy and the arts that he finds individually stated evaluations of the consequences of ways of thinking about science, social relations, and his own creative processes in the symbols of religion and art. It is in the mediums of language and the other arts that each individual, to the limits of his will and ability, must ultimately shape the universe of his personal experience.

In this paper we are concerned with concepts of communication currently underlying communication courses in general education programs, and with the concept of self-realization with which they may be consistent. We are concerned also with the relation of these concepts of communication to modern ideas about aesthetic experience which provide unity for the humanities courses and programs focused more or less explicitly on self-realization. As base for these two concerns, we shall examine briefly various ideas about self-realization that, consciously and unconsciously, give focus to life in the contemporary world.

### SELF-REALIZATION IS A RELATIVE VALUE

The idea of self-realization, as anthropologists have led us to see, varies with patterns of culture — is in fact the philosophic center which gives to historic and present cultures their uniqueness, and to individuals participating in these cultures their sense of individuality, of selfhood. Furthermore, as we shall document later, it is in the process of communication that the possibilities for self-realization are contained. We have seen this, to the world's distress, in the one-way system of communication which characterizes the police state. Where communication is *from* the elite *to* others, self-realization for any appreciable number of persons is idealized as obedience to supreme command. In a democratic service state, on the other hand, communication is a two-way process, not only from one person to another or group, but the response as well. It is communication *with* one's fellows rather than to them. Self-realization for all persons within this pattern is potentially a con-

<sup>8</sup>Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), p. 221.

tinuous process; the maturity of the self at any time is proportionate to the individual's readiness for consistent, comprehensive response to varied phases of his environment.

There are individuals, however, within the two-way communication of our culture, whose family or local subculture has provided only limited experience with modern knowledge and with the existence of alternate attitudes toward exploration and extension of knowledge. They govern their lives within these limitations. Some, like the characters of Aeschylean drama, act as if the realization of self were to be achieved in fulfillment of predetermined ends. Others, like Dante, anticipate self-realization in a life after death. Still others, while looking to the present rather than to the past or the future, idealize fulfillment in the strictly personal terms of the singular pronouns I and me. And yet others find their sense of dignity in forceful domination or in paternalistic control over associates in family, politics, economics, education, religion, and so on.

These patterns of self-realization, outmoded by new knowledge and the resulting structure of society, are being replaced for many individuals by the ideal of the self which, with enlivened imagination, consciously extends its sympathetic identification with others and deepens its spirituality in cooperation with them — witness Tom Joad in *The Grapes of Wrath*. It is not enough, however, that the self should ultimately learn the value of cooperation; the self grows through group action employed consciously as method and context for personal-social maturity. As Max Carl Otto says in *The Human Enterprise*:

... individual potentialities will in the future be compelled to realize themselves along with, rather than over against, community of effort with others. . . . If this cooperative form of individuality is out of the question, individuality for the many will vanish. It will be reserved for the few who prove to be powerful enough to seize and hold the privilege until their game too is up. The masses of us will take orders from those few. Individuality will either become communal, or in any liberal sense it will disappear, and with it will go the supreme quality of human nature.<sup>4</sup>

Even the self maturing in cooperative undertakings seems today to have still more discriminating disciplines to meet. Studies in psychiatry,<sup>5</sup> in the psychology of ego-involve-

<sup>4</sup>Max Carl Otto, *The Human Enterprise* (New York: Crofts, third printing, 1947), p. 212.

<sup>5</sup>Franz Alexander and Thomas French, *Psychoanalytic Therapy* (New York: Ronald Press, 1946).



ments,<sup>6</sup> and in the maintenance of status in various communities' point to need for consistency within the value structure of the self, which in turn must be consistent with the direction of cultural change toward wider recognition of the dignity and responsibility of the human person. This orientation toward personal and cultural evolution tosses out our traditional and, as Whitehead says, "vicious assumption" that the value structure of an earlier generation will hold for any subsequent time. "We are living in the first period in human history for which this assumption is false."<sup>8</sup>

The modern self, launching into an era of unknown and unpredictable events, cannot fall back on traditional values; it needs a pattern of values which includes procedures for identification of emergent ideas and methods in family relations, art, science, religion, and politics. The individual needs procedures for harmonizing these ideas so that he may be at home with himself in a consistent approach to the major phases of his life. At this level of discrimination he defines for himself the nature of the totality which he is. The practical consequences of such an attitude, according to Gardner Murphy, is that the individual embraces new modes of action, including communication, as "a continuation and fulfillment of himself."<sup>9</sup>

This brief effort at definition of the relativity of the value "self," implies no blueprint for personality. On the contrary, it seeks only to suggest a *direction of development* toward conscious individuality which in cooperation with other individuals retains sufficient flexibility to interact with the rest of society to effect increasing integration of personal-cultural values for "others" included in the self.

We move now to concepts of communication which, applied in education, lead logically to one or another pattern of self-realization.

### SELF-REALIZATION AND COMMUNICATION

One of man's most persistent concerns, of course, has been language, particularly in those places and periods when new

<sup>6</sup>Muzaffer Sherif and Hsley Cantril, *The Psychology of Ego-Involvements* (New York: Wiley, 1947).

<sup>7</sup>Margaret Mead, "Some Cultural Approaches to Communication Problems," in *The Communication of Ideas*, Lyman Bryson, editor (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948).

<sup>8</sup>Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), p. 117.

<sup>9</sup>Frederick L. Murphy, *Self-Consistency, A Theory of Personality*, Foreword by Gardner Murphy (New York: Island Press, 1945), p. 2.

knowledge provided new directions and meanings disturbing to the existent pattern of self-realization. Witness Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Dante's *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*, Herder's *Über den Ursprung der Sprache*, or Whitman's *Democratic Vistas*. In our time the technology of transportation and mass communication gives emerging ideas global importance. Instead of one outstanding scholar in a leading nation formulating a new way of looking at language, a thoughtful persons on a wide geographic front attempt to cope with the significance of language as the primary cohesive for human community; for example, Vossler in *The Spirit of Language in Civilization*, Cassirer in *Philosophy of Symbolic Form*, Hayakawa in *Language in Action*, Morris in *Signs, Language and Behavior*, Richards in *Principles of Literary Criticism* and *How to Read a Page*, and Hutchins and Adler in *The Higher Learning in America* and *How to Read a Book*, respectively.

In this country, as we see in the work of R. M. Hutchins at the University of Chicago and of I. A. Richards, for instance, for the General Education Board,<sup>10</sup> very different philosophies of language have developed to meet the uncertainties and confusions of our time. In the case of Hutchins, the quest for integrative method and clarity lead back to the absolutistic disciplines of the Middle Ages for study of "The Great Books." Working out his pattern of certainty in the curriculum of St. John's College, Annapolis, Hutchins reinstated the medieval trivium in which rhetoric with its subordinate language arts of grammar and logic "are primarily and essentially the arts of teaching and being taught." This philosophy of one-way communication in language, projected to its ends in a philosophy of education, leads Hutchins to say:

Education implies teaching. Teaching implies knowledge. Knowledge is truth. The truth is everywhere the same. Hence education should be everywhere the same.<sup>11</sup>

#### *Modern science and communication*

In contrast, democratically-minded teachers and scholars have sought a new rationale in the increasing body of biological, psychological, and anthropological knowledge. Much of our feeling for the relation of communication and aesthetic ex-

<sup>10</sup>I. A. Richards, *Interpretation in Teaching* (New York: Harcourt-Beace, 1934).

<sup>11</sup>Robert M. Hutchins, *The Higher Learning in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936), p. 66.

perience in the process of self-realization stems from studies in these sciences of the ways in which an individual in any species survives and grows through expressive action.

### *Ideas from biology*

All animals, including man, share a basic impulse for survival expressed in propagation and other forms of action. For all animals the simplest form of expressive action may be slight external movements of the body, which are expressions of inner tensions aroused by hunger or other physical discomfort. The self-preservative movement of any part of the body occasions readjustment, however slight, in the entire organism. At the completion of the action, therefore, the animal is an essentially different organism with a new relation to a new environment. It has survived and grown.

Growth varies with the complexity of response to environmental stimuli. That growth is most comprehensive which embraces the widest variety of experience with least tension and conflict. There is a limit, however, to the number of experiences to which animals can react. There is a limit too to the conflicting experiences that can be tolerated by an organism. Beyond these limits the organism's dynamic impulse toward unity is frustrated. The nervous system breaks down in varying degrees.

The human individual has the widest range of potential responses to his environment — from instinctive bodily movement to those employing symbolic gesture in dance, design, tonal sequences, and (most complex of all inventions) oral and written language. Because he has language, and through it opportunity to integrate both remembered and imagined experience into an attitude toward himself in his environment, he becomes conscious of his individuality. This consciousness of self, peculiar to man, permits him to exceed preoccupation with physical self-preservation. With risk to life he may act to preserve his inner integrity, his self. The most significantly human form of action is the symbolic response in a medium of communication. We may say with Dewey that man's most significant achievement, which has come only in recent years, is the consciousness of his own symbolic processes.

### *Ideas from psychology*

Psychologists, along with biologists, recognize that the self matures through the individual's interaction with his environ-

ment. Their concern, however, has been more specifically with the symbolic process through which each individual develops and maintains harmonious personal-social integration.

The symbolic process involves both *impressive* and *expressive* experiences for both communicator and his audience. In an initial moment or period of impression, the individual becomes aware of an idea, value, or event whose meaning disturbs his current pattern of values. At the same time his organic impulse toward unity demands that he integrate the new experience into his pattern of alternatives. The process of repatterning his self occasions a heightened tension which we may describe as an emotional-intellectual response of the whole organism. The tension seeks discharge in expression.

Expression of the individual's response goes through two phases: one, an image or *primary symbol*, suffused with the feeling tone of the experience, rises to consciousness and directs selective focus on the varied factors of the disturbing experience; two, a *secondary symbol* (word, shape, tone, and so on) which literally "ex-presses" the inner image, objectifies that image so that the individual in listening to himself, reading what he writes, or observing what he designs, clarifies for himself what was earlier only a "feeling."<sup>12</sup> His evaluation of what he has done, according to I. A. Richards, involves use of a constantly interdependent grammar-logic-rhetoric as the process of "self-discovering thought."<sup>13</sup>

The full increment of his self-discovering thought is not realized, however, while the individual himself remains his only evaluative audience. His interaction with society comes in the shaping of his "feelings" in symbols with meaning to others as well as himself. The quality of his interaction is measured in the extent to which his organization of selected symbols engenders in his audience attitudes comparable to his own.<sup>14</sup> If he is successful in this conscious effort, he realizes more fully than at any other time or in any other way his freedom to choose the values he lives by. His interaction, which he witnesses and evaluates through the communication skills of observing, listening, or reading, is the process of self-realization.

<sup>12</sup>"New Perspectives in the Language Arts," *Proceedings of the Wisconsin Conference on Communication*, Summer 1948, Wisconsin Ideas in Education, September Issue, 1949.

<sup>13</sup>I. A. Richards, *Interpretation in Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1938), p. 18.

<sup>14</sup>George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), pp. 75-82.

*Ideas from anthropology*

For the modern anthropologist, truth is not everywhere the same; it is everywhere relative to the values which give coherence to one culture or another. As Ralph Linton shows in *The Cultural Background of Personality*, the pattern of culture in which a child is reared determines the deeper levels of personality and continues to influence the direction and process of self-realization through the configuration of responses with which the individual interacts with his community.<sup>15</sup> Margaret Mead's comparative studies of three primitive cultures show that the personality pattern reflects the communication pattern in degrees of precision thinking, attention span, excitability, readiness to accept authority.<sup>16</sup> Ruth Benedict's examination of pre-war Japanese culture in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* shows that communication patterns are similarly significant in world cultures. She shows how the idea of self-realization centers in the symbolic significance of the word *on*, or "obligation." *On* reaches into the individual's obligations to the past, his immediate political and social relations, and his feeling of responsibility to the future.

To a modern philosophy of communication these and comparable studies contribute several key ideas that bear, as we shall see, on the teaching of courses in both communication and humanities. In the first place, concepts of self-realization vary from culture to culture. Also, the pattern of self-realization is governed by the pattern of communication which integrates both culture and personality. Further, the pattern of communication as well as the ideas and values communicated in the process of self-realization of any individual are symbols of the culture in which the communicator lives.

In summary then, the modern concept of communication appropriate to the *democratic direction of human culture* must provide for a two-way process. Any individual, to discover, mature, or maintain self must have opportunity, attitudes, and skills for interaction with his community. There are, however, numerous factors besides some explicit educational efforts, which militate against two-way communication today. The revolutionary development of facilities for mass communication

<sup>15</sup>Ralph Linton, *The Cultural Background of Personality* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1941), p. 142.

<sup>16</sup>Margaret Mead, "Some Cultural Approaches to Communication Problems," in *The Communication of Ideas*, Lyman Bryson, editor (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), pp. 13-17.

— high-speed color press, radio and motion pictures — coupled with calculated measures of audience response<sup>17</sup> provide opportunity for the first time for great numbers of people to participate in both local and world community. However, economic factors of the communications industries, plus the remoteness of the communicator from his audience, have tended to lessen his sense of responsibility for the consequences of his expression. At the same time an audience educated in the disciplines of language alone finds itself ill-equipped in attitudes and skills to deal with subtly purposive language symbols reinforced by color, design, music, gesture — as in magazine and billboard advertising, radio and motion picture programming. For the self to survive in today's climate of communication with its disintegratively unsequential gusts from varied directions, the individual must be "literate" in more mediums than language. And he must be conscious that this new literacy is his method of participation in the evolution of his own culture.

These modern ideas, as we observe in other chapters of this book, underlie many of the variously titled and variously patterned courses in communication that have become part of the general education programs of nearly two hundred colleges and universities since 1943. Some schools continue their emphasis on "correct English." Others—Northwestern University, for instance, and Howard College, Talladega, University of Iowa, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute—find satisfaction in bringing together previously separate concerns for oral and written language. An increasing proportion of schools, including the University of Minnesota department of general studies, the University of Denver, and Denver Junior College, the California Junior Colleges at San Francisco and San Mateo, the New Jersey State Teachers Colleges at Trenton and Newark, and the Wisconsin State Teachers Colleges at River Falls and Milwaukee, are stressing communication skills in observing, listening, speaking, reading, and writing as they are used in the community. Still others, including Stephens College, Macalaster, Bard, Marygrove, Antioch, the University of Boston, and the University of North Carolina, have set up an administrative division or department of communication, or a communication center providing for varied creative experiences and

<sup>17</sup>For extended discussion and bibliography see Smith, Laswell and Casey, *Propaganda, Communication and Public Opinion* (Princeton University Press, 1946).

evaluative disciplines in both individual and cooperative arts. These broad classifications, of course, do little justice to the individualizing detail of the various courses. They are included here only to show the variety of course organizations which are used explicitly to facilitate personal integration in society through handling the common symbols of modern community living.

As we move now to a modern idea of aesthetic experience which energizes our courses in humanities, we shall find considerable similarity to the modern concept of two-way communication.

#### SELF-REALIZATION AND HUMANITIES

Self is the basic value in democracy. In one sense, it is the only absolute; and opportunity for self-realization is our major political and educational imperative. In another sense, self is a relative value, varying from person to person. The bases of variation are again biological: the acuity of the senses; the innate potential depth of the "more human values of curiosity, memory, imagination, and sympathy; and the innate capacity for relational thinking on which aesthetic formulations in science, politics, or art depend. The artist tends to be an individual who excels other persons in these qualities. It is his work in literature, music, painting, and the other arts that clarifies and preserves values of human community. The creation of a significant synthesis of cultural values is the artist's response to environmental stimuli. His work varies in degree only from the responses of other people to life around them.

Between the observed *is* and the sympathetically imaginable *might be*, the artist experiences a zone of shifting and chaotic values. The insecurity of his values brings on a serious emotional-intellectual disturbance. It threatens the design for living which characterizes his self. To ignore the disturbance, or to make less than a total effort to harmonize the conflicts it symbolizes, is ruinous to the self. To preserve his self from disintegration, the artist exteriorizes the meaning of his experience in some medium — language, tone, design, and so on. Partial salvation is achieved when a symbol, suffused with the emotional character of the experience, rises to consciousness to help identify the cause of the disturbance. But complete salvation is assured only when the artist gives his symbol objective form and elaborates it from the collective elements of his society.

The process of giving form to the emotionalized symbol is really also one of crystallizing new personal-social values — literally, of remaking the artist's outlook toward himself in his society. This is a difficult and painful renascence, but the more intense the effort put forth, the more intense the sense of freedom to control his environment that accompanies it. The harmonization of conflicts, explicitly undertaken for the preservation of self, is a symbolic interpretation of the *meaning of self* in the contemporaneous culture. As a new formulation of this *most central human concern*, it is, as I. A. Richards suggests, "The point at which the growth of mind shows itself."<sup>18</sup>

The affirmation of self achieved in the completion of the work of art is an important phase in the artist's aesthetic experience. It is completed, however, only when the work of art calls forth an evaluative response from its audience. The person who identifies himself with the artist during his creative struggle and formulates his response in some medium achieves a sense of freedom comparable to the artist's. The significance of the work of art for each individual who experiences it is the readiness for action it engenders. Its value is measured in the consequences of such action within the widest, most completely ordered system of relationships we are aware of.

The implications of this modern aesthetic for teaching the humanities are being fulfilled in increasing numbers of courses. Mere chronological arrangement of contemporaneous culture symbols from literature, art, music, and philosophy is less prevalent than it was ten years ago. A larger feeling for design and rhythmic progression seems to underlie four identifiable patterns of course organization. One pattern, exemplified at Stephens College, finds its center in attention to formal aesthetic principles through which a student may evaluate the organization of materials in any medium. A second pattern, used at Princeton, Harvard, Amherst, and University of Wisconsin, among other places, focuses on the intellectual history of Western civilization as a comparative base for assessing one's approach to modern society. A third humanities emphasis, common to most courses but more clearly portrayed in such schools as the University of Louisville, University of Minnesota

<sup>18</sup>I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1934), p. 61.



General College, and Columbia College, is on the observable relationships between the arts and their contemporaneous society. This course organization is characterized in some schools by study of contemporary arts and opportunity for creative work in several mediums — both directed toward understanding how the individual interprets his personal experience through art.

In these three course patterns there is an observable trend toward the detailed study of a few significant works of art rather than an acquaintance with numerous examples. This is strikingly evident in the selection of literature. Here the realization of the artist's whole design as a symbol of his culture is dictating the use of various great books in their entirety; witness Harvard's use of "Homer, one or two of the Greek tragedies, Plato, the Bible, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Tolstoy."<sup>18</sup>

In a fourth pattern additional implications of modern ideas of communication and aesthetic experience are realized. It accents successive culture epochs through which man in Western civilization has expanded and intensified controls over his relation to his physical and social environments. Among other schools, Stanford, University of Minnesota College of Science, Literature and Arts, and the Colorado State College of Education offer examples of such study of the culture epoch — and of those symbols of culture in various mediums that so synthesize human values that "the growth of mind shows itself."

Carried to its logical extreme, the study of the culture epoch might center in the most far-reaching literary, musical, artistic, and philosophical syntheses at those transitional places and periods in human culture when, as we observed earlier, man's philosophy of language reflected his changing attitude toward self. As literary nucleus for this study of changing concepts of self, we may hypothesize the use of the Electra material as reworked successively by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; *The Divine Comedy*, *Hamlet* or *The Tempest*, *Faust*, *Moby Dick*, and *Anna Karenina*. In these selections and their contemporaneous art, music, and philosophy are the major patterns of self-realization that emerged with emerging national cultures in Western civilization. They gained currency and have maintained it even into our twentieth century,

<sup>18</sup>*General Education in a Free Society*, Report of the Harvard Committee (Harvard University Press, 1943), p. 207.

despite our knowledge that new philosophies of maturity must replace them.

Only twentieth century arts can symbolize the variety of patterns of self-realization which modern society affords. For the individual concerned with the symbolic processes of communication, we may hypothesize a series of books whose explicit concern with the instrumental value of the conscious creative act provides supportive exemplification for psychological-anthropological findings about communication and aesthetic experience: in music, Mann's *Doctor Faustus* and Rolland's *Jean Christophe*; in art, Maugham's *The Moon and Sixpence*; in literature, Wolfe's *You Can't Go Home Again*; in architecture, Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead*; in literature and the dance, Sandburg's *Remembrance Rock*.

And significantly enough, it is only in the last and most recent of these that the reader shares with the artist an explicit concern for a philosophy of maturity which includes the process of communication by which the human person modifies himself in the face of the unknown.

### PROJECTIONS

We have observed a variety of course patterns in communication. We have observed a comparable variety in courses in humanities. We have found, however, a common center in communication courses in a biological-psychological-anthropological idea of communication as the process of self-realization in expressive interaction with society. We have detailed a comparable idea of aesthetic experience as unifying center for humanities courses dealing with literature, art, music, and philosophy. Major distinctions between the most advanced examples of both kinds of courses are two: (1) communication courses take specific responsibility for developing communication skills in varied mediums, while humanities courses focus on ideas and values; (2) communication courses tend to work with contemporary materials of local community life, while humanities courses tend to deal with more complex historical symbols. It seems important that further development of these two phases of general education programs be guided by consideration of their distinctive characteristics and their common goal.

The Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards of the National Education Association has proposed

one guidepost for relating the development of communication and humanities programs. At the Bowling Green Conference on The Education of Teachers, summer 1948, the commission recommended a "*continuing but differentiated* approach to contemporary and historical symbols of culture in the several art mediums in a four-year sequence moving through skills in several communication arts — and reaching synthesis in the humanities."<sup>20</sup>

Within the general education program sustained through four years of college, we may anticipate certain specific developments. We may look for communication courses to sharpen their focus on the conscious symbolic process. Subject matter will tend toward *communication about communication* as it functions in contemporary society — community forums, newspapers, magazines, radio, motion pictures. Increasing numbers of courses will broaden to include attention to more mediums than language, with marked advances in critical disciplines for the composite mediums of radio and motion picture.

These moves in communication courses will have several effects on courses in humanities. We may anticipate, it seems, that a number of schools will move humanities courses, with their philosophical aesthetic approach, into junior or senior years of college, where students can build on their familiarity in dealing with common symbols acquired in communication courses. Humanities courses will tend to use various significant symbols of culture rather than a prescribed list of "The Great Books"; further, we may expect that increased understanding of the mass mediums as emergent art forms will bring increased use of radio and motion pictures in humanities courses — whether in historical concern for Olivier's *Hamlet*, modern cultural concern for expressionistic communication of postwar values in Welles' *Macbeth*, or in philosophic concern for self-realization of a deaf-mute through access to symbols in Jane Wyman's *Johnny Belinda*.

Through such explicit and sustained emphasis on self-realization in general education we may look forward to more and more individuals consciously and confidently entering into the evolutionary process of democracy.

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<sup>20</sup>The Education of Teachers—as viewed by the profession. Official Group Reports of the Bowling Green Conference held at Bowling Green State University, June 30-July 3, 1948 (Washington: National Education, 1948), p. 156.

